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ABSTRACT

Located in Baytown, Texas, Sterling Municipal Library's Adult Literacy Project provided free one-to-one tutoring to all totally and functionally illiterate adults in its service area. All tutoring was performed in the library during regular hours of operation. The project used Literacy Volunteers of America methodology and limited itself to teaching basic reading. Students were not assessed any fees for reading services; the library provided all materials. A special collection of reading materials was established to promote independent reading. Since January 1986, the project has served 400 students, equally mixed among Anglo, Hispanic, and Black populations with a small group of Asian students. To provide support for students, bimonthly newsletters were sent to their homes. A telephone support system was used to check on student needs. Tutors were exclusively volunteers who had undergone a 15-hour training session. Bimonthly inservice training sessions were provided for tutors. A U.S. Department of Education grant was used in the following ways: increasing availability of tutor training sessions; paying printing costs for four issues of the student literacy publication, "Brighter Horizons"; and providing for instructional materials for Families Reading Together, an intergenerational satellite facility in a low-income neighborhood. (Appendixes include the four issues of "Brighter Horizons," a copy of "Folktales" retold by Families Reading Together, and newspaper articles on the project.) (YLB)

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ED 379 498

# FINAL FINANCIAL STATUS

# AND

# PERFORMANCE REPORT

**submitted by**
**Denise R. Fischer**

**LIBRARY LITERACY PROGRAM**
**FY 1989**

**Grant # R167A90115**

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Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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**FINAL FINANCIAL STATUS**
**AND**
**PERFORMANCE REPORT**

**LIBRARY LITERACY PROGRAM**
**FY 1989**

**Part I : General Information**

1. Grant recipient :

   Sterling Municipal Library
   Wilbanks Avenue
   Baytown, Texas 77520

2. Contact person :

   Denise Fischer
   Assistant City Librarian - Public Services
   (713) 427-7331

3. Grant number : R167A90115

4. Grant amount : $9,669

   Amount expended : $9,666.70

**Part II : Narrative Report**

**Project Background**

Sterling Municipal Library's Adult Literacy Project began January 1, 1986, with the aid of a one-year grant from the Houston Area Library System, of which we are a member. We have received additional one-year grants from HALS for fiscal years 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990. We have also been awarded five U.S. Department of Education LSCA grants to cover supplemental materials. Our project provides free, confidential, one-to-one tutoring to all totally and functionally illiterate adults in our service area. Not only do we service citizens within Baytown itself, but we have also enrolled students from all of eastern Harris County and western Chambers County. All tutoring is performed in the library during regular hours of operation which total 60 hours per week.

The project utilizes the Literacy Volunteers of America methodology and limits itself to the teaching of basic reading. A community referral service has been established between the library and the local community college, Lee College. The library refers all students interested in G.E.D. instruction, English as a second language instruction, and severe reading disabilities brought about by physical problems. Similarly, Lee College refers to us students who have exhibited the need for intensive, one-to-one reading assistance at very low levels. We also have expanded referring partners to include the Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District, and other social service agencies.

We have learned that potential students are easily deterred by fees and materials charges. Even minimal costs can cause the loss of family support. Therefore, our students are not assessed any fees for reading services. All materials are provided by the library, including pens and paper. Workbooks and dictionaries are also provided free of charge. A special collection of reading materials has been established to promote independent learning. This collection includes recreational reading as well as consumer and vocational information.

Since January 1986, we have serviced 400 students. Statistically, students have been equally mixed between Anglo, Hispanic, and Black populations and have included a small group of Oriental students. To provide support for our students, bi-monthly newsletters are sent to their homes. A telephone support system is also used to check on student needs.

Our trained tutors are exclusively volunteers who have agreed to donate a minimum of two hours per week for one year to tutor another adult in reading. Each tutor undergoes a 15-hour training session. The core of our tutor team comes from a senior citizens group, the Baytown Retired Teachers' Association, which has adopted our project as their service function. Other tutors come from all economic and educational backgrounds and include many retired and current Exxon employees, as well as current Mobay employees. We have also been pleased that we have enlisted some of our handicapped citizens in our group of tutors.

Tutors are supplied with a collection of instructional texts to support their instruction. While Literacy Volunteers of America teaching methods are used within the program, the methods espoused by Laubach and other groups are provided for reference. All consumable materials in the form of lesson plan guides, transparencies, notebooks, etc. are provided free of charge to the tutors. Instructional aids to foster audial, visual, and kinesthetic approaches to instruction are also made available.

To keep the tutors updated as to the materials that are available to them, bi-monthly newsletters are published. We also realize that our tutors are not trained reading educators or diagnosticians; therefore, we provide bi-monthly in-service training sessions for them. For resources, we have won the support of our local school district and Lee College which have provided trained reading diagnosticians as instructors for our in-services.

New tutor training sessions have been held bi-monthly and are publicized through the local newspaper and speeches before local service organizations. To date, both of these methods, coupled with previously mentioned means of publicity, have provided filled quotas for each training workshop.

The entire project is coordinated by a staff professional librarian who has completed training in library tutoring, tutor training, and literacy program management, an assistant coordinator who has also undergone tutor training and trainer training, and three part-time clericals.

**Grant Usage**

The following goals and objectives were met as a result of this grant:

**I. Increased tutor training to keep abreast with student demand**

This grant allowed us to increase the availability of tutor training sessions from quarterly to bi-monthly, training 96 tutors. As a result of these efforts, tutor and student levels remained just about equal; therefore, we had no student on the waiting list for longer than two months.

**II. Provided printing supply costs for the student literary publication *Brighter Horizons***

Three hundred copies of each issue are distributed through mailings to interested literacy groups, donors, and individuals having an interest in our literacy program. In addition, all members of the Houston Area Library System, city officials, tutors, and students receive copies. We have been very honored that numerous LVA affiliates throughout the U. S. have requested copies of *Brighter Horizons* for their students. Private donations and other grants provide the funds for stamps.

Four issues were printed with this grant. The library provided the costs for editing, typing, layout and design, printing, collating, and distribution.

Samples of each issue are enclosed.

**III. & IV. Provide for instructional materials for an intergenerational satellite facility in a low-socioeconomic neighborhood. Provide a book discussion group for new readers.**

The joy of reading has long been a priority for both public libraries and schools in America. The tragedy, however, is that one out of every five American adults lacks the basic skills needed to share in this joy. A study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education called *A Nation at Risk* found that children whose parents read to them before they start school tend to perform better in school. However, millions of parents lack basic skills necessary to help their children in this rudimentary way. Between one-fifth and one-third of all parents cannot read a bedtime story to their children. In addition, children who grow up in homes devoid of books and print materials cannot develop a love for the printed word. Research indicates, then, that while illiteracy and poor reading skills are not hereditary, they can be generational since poor reading habits are passed from parent to child.

Further studies into illiteracy predict that unless drastic changes are made in the next 10 years, these growing children will enter the workforce ill equipped to meet changing technological demands. According to the Hudson Institute's report *Workforce 2000*, these trends, when coupled with the predicted smaller growth in the labor force, project that by the year 2000 employers will experience serious skill shortages not experienced since World War II.

Comparing the results of these two studies as well as others leads one to propose that approaching illiteracy "holistically" is a solution to breaking the cycle. Intergenerational literacy programs can provide this holistic approach since the literacy of the entire family unit is remediated. To that end, we initiated an intergenerational model that partners the library, the Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District, and a community group sponsored by Lee College, the Hispanic Educational Access Committee (HEAC), as well as Hispanic owned businesses.

The model developed by Denise Fischer and Kathy Barnett calls itself "Families Reading Together." Its roots are found in Boston University's "Collaborations for Literacy" pioneered by Ruth Nickse. Yet, it takes the "Collaborations" model to the next generation by employing specific educational objectives for each level of participant. The "Families Reading Together" model utilizes specific instructional units which take four weeks to complete. In addition, the model establishes four distinct "tracks," one for adults, one for school aged children, one for preschoolers, and one for infants. The tracks function independently as well as in tandem with each other. By providing enrichment activities for all age groups, families do not have to worry about child care to participate in the program. The Great Plains National Instructional Television Library (GPN) produces program notes for the *Reading Rainbow* titles which also provide ideas for these activities.

Entering into a partnership with the school district was welcomed by both sides. In fact, public library/school district sponsorships have a long history in our community. Moreover, Kathy Barnett, while volunteering since 1986 in the LVA project, is also principal of a middle school. The HEAC includes citizens who have set as a priority the educational enrichment of Hispanic citizens. Many are both Friends of the Library and school district employees. Each partner assumed responsibility for a specific set of tasks in the model. The district agreed to provide an elementary school campus as the site for the project as well as the efforts of Josie Orosco, a Chapter I counselor. The HEAC adopted the task of recruiting the volunteers who would serve as tutors. The library provided the financial support in the form of materials, training, and a bilingual site coordinator, Lupe Alfaro. Hispanic owned businesses contributed funds to hire a security guard for the evenings the group met.

The campus chosen for the project had been designated by the federally funded Chapter I program as an economically and culturally disadvantaged campus. It was also located in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood. The scores achieved by students in the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) proved to be one of the lowest in the district, and parental involvement in school functions was often lagging. Using this campus would provide us with the opportunity to create a unique extra-curricular activity.

Only parents of campus children were chosen for the project. This was to further our goal of fostering a stronger feeling of loyalty to the school. We targeted only those parents who were orally bilingual, but whose low literacy levels could not provide the nurturing, educational environment in the home. All parents realized that they were making a weekly commitment for themselves and their children, a commitment that for Phase I would last from January through May. Five families were chosen for the pilot, but this small number of families yielded twenty participants. All parents were pretested using the LVA READ test and were given vision screens.

During each two-hour session, parents spent one hour learning to read materials of interest to themselves using the traditional LVA methodology. Most of these studies revolved around job-related or life skills. The field tested LVA series *Read on! II* was used as a basic skills text. The second hour was equally divided between learning to read a targeted children's book and group parenting skills. The model used the "Reading Rainbow" children's books and TV series as materials. Parenting skills often focused on materials sent home by school counselors or materials that are directly related to parental involvement in the child's educational progress. Additional samples of quality children's reading materials were also made available for parents to borrow.

School-aged children divided their first hour between using the campus' World Institute of Computer Aided Teaching (WICAT) computerized reading laboratory and working with a tutor in a small group setting on TEAMS vocabularies and English oral proficiency. The second hour found the children learning vocabulary and thematic content that, unbeknownst to them, corresponded to information they would need to appreciate the targeted book their parents were mastering. These skills were taught

using discussion and craft activities. We learned very early in the project that vocabularies taken for granted in homes more culturally and literarily exposed were absent here. Discussions involving simple contrasts between "Back East" and "Out West" found that even terms like "skyscraper" could not be pictorially envisioned by students in the fourth grade.

Preschool children, who were mostly monolingual Spanish speakers, were placed in small group tutoring and taught English vocabularies and prereading skills. They, too, participated in thematically based craft activities as well as spent time using the WICAT computer's preschool modules.

The fourth session in the unit brought parents and children together in their family units to share the learned book. Because of the prereading activities, both parents and children could share the impact of the book as well as the nurturing experience of sharing literature. Once complete, all parents and all children joined together to discuss the book. Literal comprehension and sequencing were explored with the children, while higher levels of comprehension (inferential, comparative, evaluative) were explored with the adults. The concept of a book discussion club was an entirely new experience for parents. It did not take them long, however, to begin to share their thoughts. Sample comprehension questions were included in each unit's curriculum guide; therefore, the discussion had been somewhat practiced during one-to-one tutoring time.

Children were next asked to present and explain their crafts to the group. This not only worked with oral language skills, but improved self-esteem and confidence. Free children's books were then awarded to those parents who earned them during the month by reading at least four books to their children. This guaranteed that literature would find its way into the family's personal library. It also illustrated the power and influence of reading; because, the more you read, the more free books you earned.

During the first six months (Phase I), the project explored topics that related to stereotypes and preconceived ideas that often originate due to a lack of experience or knowledge, handicaps, the senses (we taught the children to recite Jack and Jill in sign language), caring for pets, life on a farm, and community service personnel.

Phase II of the project began September 1. Eight curriculum units were added to the collection. All five families returned to the program; an additional five Hispanic families were added. A total of 50 people participate each week.

Phase II topics again use the "Reading Rainbow" literature. Each book we chose examines multi-cultural diversity as it relates to families. Oral African folk tradition, Chinese family traditions, and the European vs. Mexican immigration experiences are just a sampling of the topics to be covered September - May. An additional Title VI grant will cover costs October 1990 - May 1991.

Significant increases in self-esteem and self-confidence have been demonstrated by both parents and children. One father's hand physically quivered as he read to his child for the first time; subsequent readings have not only produced a sense of calm, but also a brilliant smile in the process. One mother is now looking ahead at the possibility that her dream of becoming a cosmetologist might become the reality that she thought would never be possible.

One child had become quite distressed about the scores she received in phonics prior to coming to the project. She even felt that she was not bright enough to improve. Because of the extra practice she received, her scores rose into the nineties and her self-esteem skyrocketed accordingly. Still another mother noted that her children now read to each other and wish her to read to them. As she wrote, "Now, we have the beautiful experience of learning together. I love this kind of program because it also helps me to have more positive communication with my children." One mother has improved her skills to the point that she is now volunteering with the school on a weekly basis.

The participants in the project found an electricity in the air each night that molded a commitment to the program that surpassed their personal demands for the evening. One mother stated that her children wanted to come to class so badly that she used the event as a way to keep discipline at home. "If you're not good, you can't go to school that night!" And it worked! In fact, we had 100% attendance at all sessions save for a torrential thunderstorm that kept all driving to a minimum. We feel, however, that this father's written words best summarize the feelings of the adult participants: "I have lived in Baytown for many years, and in all those years, I have never really thought that knowing English was that important to me. Now that I know that [second language], it helps me a lot. I am trying hard to learn. I still think it is not too late to learn."

Since the project will run for a full school year in 1991, statistical methods for program evaluation will be used in addition to the behavioral changes. The children's TEAMS and academic scores will be compared with those from prior to entering the program. In addition, parents will be given the READ post-test and this will be compared to pretest scores.

Overall, "Families Reading Together" has been labelled a success. In addition, we feel that support for this project has brought segments of the community together in a positive way. Our experience indicates that community partners and intergenerational concepts can instill a love for reading and learning into the children of our "Workforce 2000" workpool and, hopefully, bring an end to the cycle of illiteracy.

News of our success has reached the public. Published articles on the project are enclosed.

Intergenerational / Book Club Statistics
FY 89

401 Adult students directly served (direct service = # of students per session + # of sessions)

671 Contact hours of direct service

## V. Provide a sequentially programmed literacy instruction software package

Project Star, a sequential package from Hartley Courseware, was purchased. The library owns two Apple IIe computers, one of which is equipped with a Ufonic voice synthesizer. An Echo synthesizer was purchased with Project Star for the second Apple. The system works off of either synthesizer.

During the grant year, two tutor/student inservices were given to train users in the package. In addition, staff and other tutors were trained to serve as computer mentors for individualized training on the software.

While use of the units is not as high as we would like, students and tutors take advantage of this technology during the 60 hours per week that the library is open.

**In conclusion**, we appreciate being granted these Title VI funds during FY 91. We feel that the materials and services have greatly enhanced our ability to provide quality and varied remedial reading instruction for our adult literacy students.

## Budget Comparison

| | FY89 Budget | Spent |
|---|---|---|
| Supplies | 2624 | 2622 |
| Library Materials | 5055 | 5054.70 |
| Other (stipends: workshop trainers, book discussion leader) | 1990 | 1990 |
| Total | 9669 | 9666.70 |

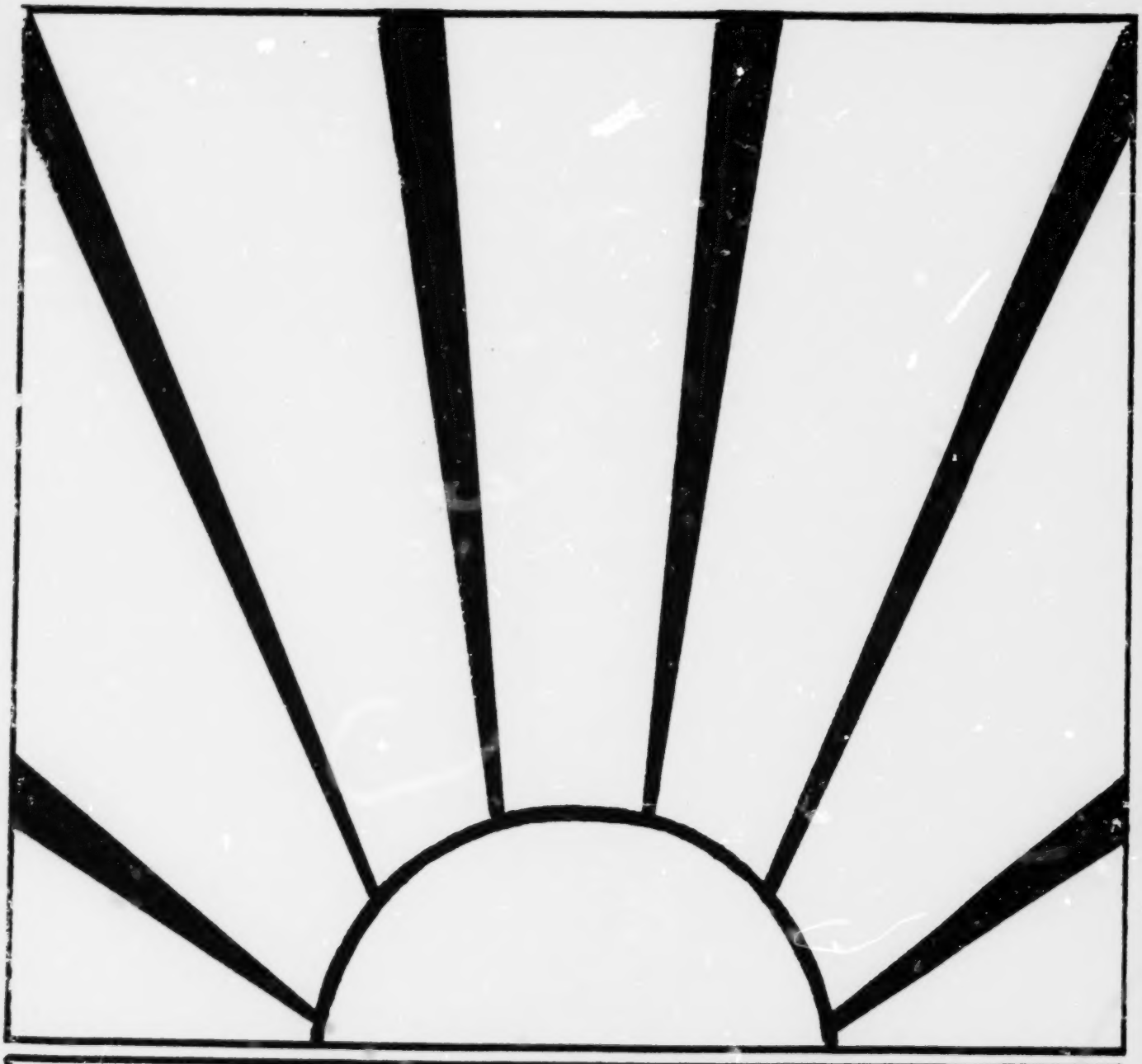
## Additional Library Statistics FY89

Adult Students Directly Served
(# of students per session x # of sessions of service)
2628

Contact Hours of Tutoring
4029.50

## Materials Purchased

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 160 | workbooks for students | 1 | Project Star computer package |
| 150 | recreational readers | 30 | tutor training texts |
| 20 | beginner dictionaries | 30 | diagnostic testing texts |
| 20 | workbooks for beginner dictionaries | | |
| 40 | picture dictionaries | | |
| 40 | picture dictionary workbooks | | |
| 20 | intermediate dictionaries | | |
| 20 | intermediate dictionary workbooks | | |
| 20 | advanced dictionaries | | |
| 80 | books for book discussion group | | |



# BRIGHTER HORIZONS

a journal comprised of the writings of participants in
Literacy Volunteers of America/Sterling Municipal Library

Baytown, Texas
No. 11, October 1989

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This issue was
made possible through

U. S. Department of Education
grant number
R167A90115

## Preface

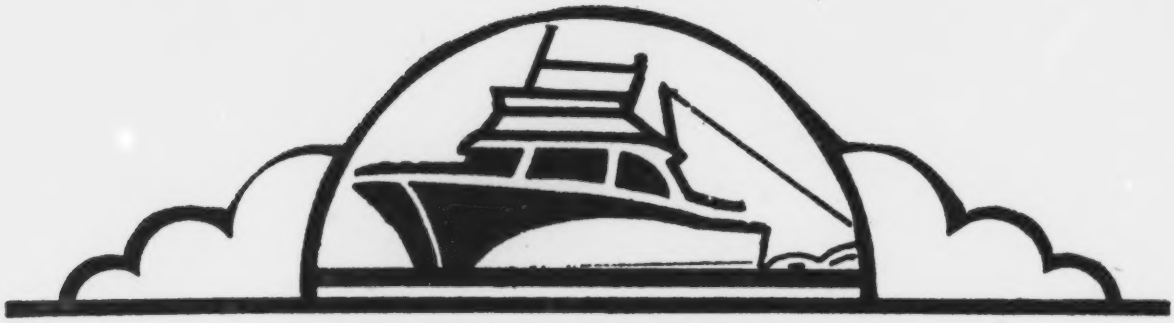
I have been tutoring since August and I already understand what the entire program of teaching Americans to read is all about. It's about wanting to improve lives, the lives of both the students and tutors. It's about learning how to read and how to appreciate what each of us is given. Watching someone learn also forces a tutor to learn about himself.

Giving the time to tutor is the best time any one individual could give to America next to the time it takes to vote in our free elections. For those of us in the reading world, voting, shopping, and reading the headlines of a newspaper are daily routines that we sometimes take for granted. But spending three months helping someone improve his life by teaching him to read has taught me that those daily activities about which I seldom thought are actually large accomplishments for someone learning to read.

Each lesson, I learn more about myself as well as about my student. The self-satisfaction of seeing someone go from barely reading through a sentence to reading through an entire paragraph because you took the time to help is the best motivator anyone can find to continue in the fight against illiteracy in America. Sure, there are days when I've had a hard day at school and I'm so tired I could sleep for days and the last thing on my mind is getting up and going to a lesson with my student, but then I stop for just a minute and think what those two hours could mean in both of our lives and I get up, wash my face and go. When it's over that night, I'm glad that I decided not to stay home, but to go help my friend.

So remember as you read through these pages, each writing is the hopes and dreams come true for both the student who wrote it and the tutor who guided the student. Writing for these brave people is not the simplest of tasks, but through this program, it is certainly becoming more of a daily routine, and that in itself is an improvement in our lives.

***-- Heidi Lutz***
***Tutor***



**A Memorable Fishing Trip**

About a year ago my wife, Anita, and I had a memorable fishing trip. We left from Galveston on the fishing ship, "Texas Ranger II." We went out between fifty and ninety miles before fishing. It took us about two and a half hours. We fished for about seven hours. Between us we caught 32 good-sized fish. They were reds, shark, and salt water drum. We had more reds.

When we returned, we cleaned the fish, packed them for two, and put them in the freezer. We had some excellent fish for quite a while.

***-- Keith***

**My Dream Vacation**

I have always wanted to go to Canada for a couple of weeks for a visit to see the country and hunt and fish. I especially like duck and deer hunting.

I have read and seen books and pictures of the beautiful lakes and towns in Canada. I especially like Edna; it's an old and beautiful town. There are a lot of lakes and places for hunting and fishing and places to go to get away. I have always wanted to go see Canada; it is a dream I hope will come true. I don't know why I want to go to Canada; I guess because it's a place I've never been. I would like to see different parts of Canada like the old French part; I heard that it was nice. I especially want to take the family to get away from Houston and visit with them and to get to see different parts of the country that none of the three of us have seen and to visit places and do things together--like going sightseeing or doing whatever we want to do that day or night. Hopefully, my son and I will get to go hunting while we are there.

I don't know if we ever will get to Canada, but that's a dream that some day I will hopefully get to fulfill. My wife likes to get away to see different things and antiques. Hopefully she can find something there. Most of all, I would just like to get away with her and do things with her while we're there. More than anything else, I would just like for us to visit with each other while we're there and have fun together. Hopefully we can do that soon, before we get too old.

And that's about it.

-- ***Charles***

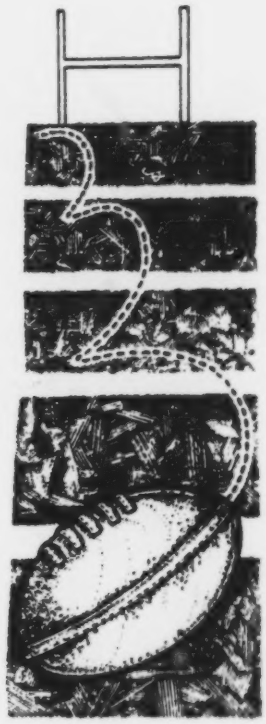
## Concentration Is the Key

I like football. It is one of my favorite sports. But the only thing is, I couldn't read all the plays, so I didn't concentrate hard enough.

Track is really my favorite sport. I can concentrate better doing something I really love. That's why I could do so well in track.

When I was in school, it was hard to concentrate in class because everyone played around too much. That made it hard to learn anything.

I love this class because it is one-on-one so you can concentrate better. The difference is you don't have other people interfering with your reading. I've found that it's not too late to learn to read.



-- ***Mark S.***

**Me**

My name is Esther. I live in Baytown with my son, Jorge. We live in an upstairs apartment.

One day in the afternoon, my son was playing outside with his friends. All of a sudden, a strong wind came. They got scared. They ran inside and closed the door hard. They told me what had happened, so I told them to stay inside.

Every Monday I go to the library for a reading class. My tutor's name is Theresa. Every Tuesday and Thursday, I go to another reading class at Lee College. I go to these classes because I'm trying to learn how to write a good, long story. I enjoy going to my reading classes because the place is peaceful and I feel good about reading there.

-- ***Esther***

**Daydream or Reality?**

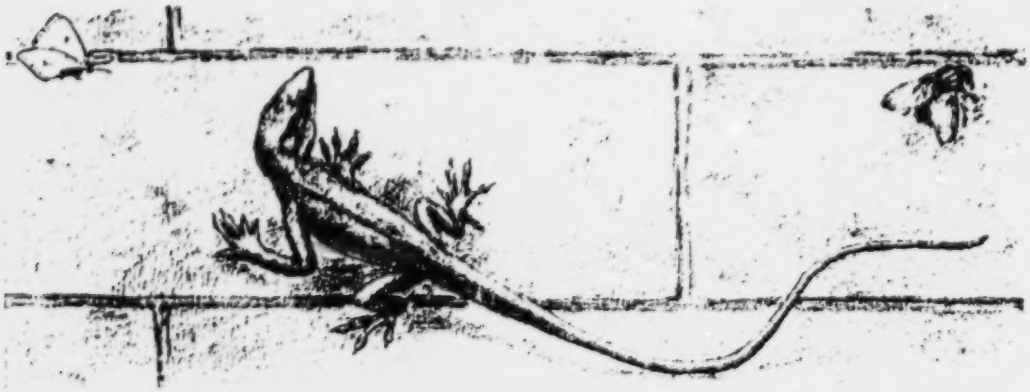
Going back to school is a daydream, of course, but without it what can you accomplish in this life? A goal and a determination to succeed were my key when I decided to go back to school and pursue a new career. I saw big obstacles in front of me. First, the language barrier, second, the financial barrier I would have to defeat and third, the time barrier. When I pictured all of these obstacles, I almost changed my mind. Several times I attempted to do it. English is hard to learn, and the homework is hard also. One day, looking beyond the horizon, I am putting myself a final end. I am arranging myself to try at first. I am so disappointed, but since I have read all those inventors in my studying book, I am determined to succeed and defeat my fear and the obstacles and excuses. Instead of "English is hard," rather I say "I can do it." All I need is a little determination and courage so I can fulfill my destiny.

***-- Kim Lien***

## Close My Eyes and Describe the Sounds

I'm sitting outside with my eyes closed, and I can hear children talking somewhere, and a baby crying. I hear cars driving by and, off in the distance, I hear a siren. I hear an airplane in the sky, birds singing, and I can hear something in the leaves. I looked and it was a little green lizard. He was so cute.

*-- G. P.*

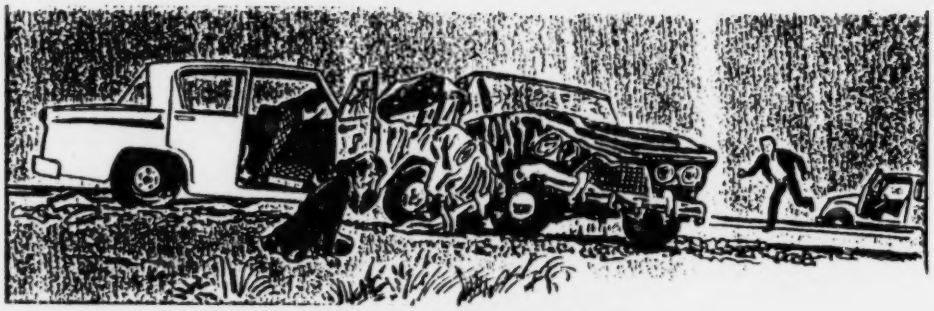


## November

The month of November begins the winter season when the cold causes the leaves to fall off the trees and crumble when children play in them.

The holiday we call Thanksgiving Day is in November when we give thanks to God for all his blessings. It is a time when families get together for a big dinner with turkey and all the trimmings. This is a neat season and holiday.

***-- Patty Sue***



**Uncle Oran's Accident**

I was at home at my Mom and Dad's house when we got the telephone call from my aunt saying my Uncle Oran was rushed on the Life Flight to Hermann Hospital and he was in critical condition. Then my dad called the hospital. The nurse said for the family to come in and then when my dad got there he had to sign surgery papers. They had to take pressure off his brain and they had to stop the internal bleeding in the spleen.

The reason for the telephone call about Uncle Oran was that he was in a car accident. After the surgery they put him in intensive care. Now he is in a coma and his fever is going up and down and the other day they had to do surgery to open up his windpipe because he had trouble breathing.

We have hope that he will get better, but he is still in critical condition. The family prays every day for him to get better.

A week has passed, and we got news that he is sitting up in bed. He is a little bit better, but he is still in critical condition. They mentioned that he might need therapy at some time, but I don't know when. We feel hopeful and happy that he's no longer in his coma.

My dad went to see him Saturday, and he was sitting up in bed, but he didn't recognize anybody in the family.

Another week has passed, and my Uncle Stanley went to see Uncle Oran and he recognized my uncle. To get finished recuperating he will need extensive therapy and he's much better and hopes in the future he will be up running around.

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***-- Kim M.***

**If I Were Famous, What Would I Be Famous For?**

This one is hard for me; therefore, it will be short. I don't wish to be famous. If I do a good deed, I don't care for anyone to know because I know God knows. If I do something well, I know I did the best I could and, again, it's with God's help.

*-- G. P.*

**Revolutionary War**

The Revolutionary War in America started on April 19, 1775 when a group of colonists fought British soldiers at Lexington, Massachusetts. Hours later in nearby Concord, colonists fired "the shot heard round the world." This is what Ralph Waldo Emerson called it when they battled British troops near a bridge. The war lasted eight years.

The news of war shocked people in both the American colonies and England. But ill-feeling between the British government and its colonies had been gradually developing for more than 10 years. After gaining control of the French empire in North America in 1763, the British had tried to restore their authority over the American colonies and to tax them more heavily. The Americans, who had enjoyed a large measure of self-government, wanted even greater freedom from British control. They refused to pay the Stamp Tax of 1765 and the Townshend duties on imports in 1767. Citizens of Boston organized a "tea party" in 1773 to dump incoming tea into the harbor rather than pay a tariff on it. Britain sent troops to support its authority.

The First Continental Congress demanded that the British abandon their efforts to make Massachusetts bow to British authority. It asked Britain to admit that Parliament had no right to tax the colonists for revenue. But the British government considered Massachusetts and its neighbors to be in rebellion. British troops in Boston were ordered to take swift action.

The Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Ties between the colonies and the mother country had now been cut. Britain launched a great offensive to crush the rebellion. A British army under Lt. Gen. William Howe assembled at New York. Gen. George Washington, who had taken command of the Continental Army, slowly withdrew his men in face of the British attacks. The patriots forced Lt. Gen. John Burgoyne and his army to surrender at Saratoga in 1777. They gained an active ally in 1778, when France recognized the independence of the U.S. and entered the war. Spain declared war on Britain in 1779, and Holland did so in 1780.

Faced by so many enemies, Britain found it difficult to assemble an army powerful enough to destroy the patriot forces. Lt. Gen. Charles Cornwallis tried to conquer the southern states after Lt. Gen. Sir Henry Clinton captured Charleston, S.C., in 1780. But he found himself checked by Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene in the far south. Cornwallis then concentrated his forces at Yorktown, Va. A French fleet cut him off there, and Washington's army of American and French soldiers attacked. On Oct. 19, 1781, Cornwallis' army surrendered at Yorktown in the war's last major action.

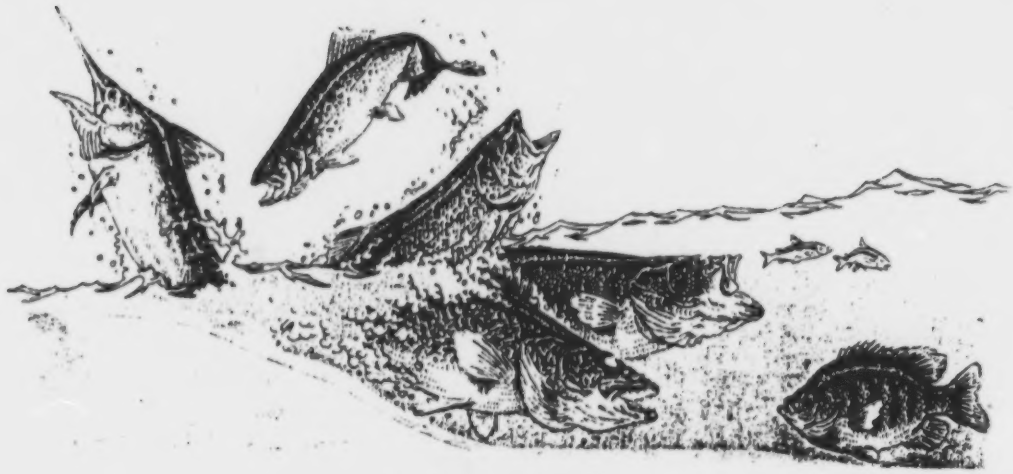
The Revolutionary War did not involve large numbers of men. It was a small war compared with modern ones. The size of the fighting forces rarely exceeded 15,000 men. Both the patriots and the redcoats, or British soldiers, relied chiefly upon the musket and bayonet. But some Americans used rifles. Britain also hired mercenaries, or soldiers paid to fight its battles, notably the Hessians from Germany. At sea, American privateers captured British ships. About a fourth of the colonists supported the redcoats. These Loyalists, or Tories, stirred the bitter hatred of the patriots.

After the surrender at Yorktown, Great Britain gave up all hope of conquering the patriots. On Sept. 3, 1783, it recognized the new republic in the Treaty of Paris, formally ending the Revolutionary War. The American Revolutionary war gave birth to a new nation. Thirteen British colonies won their freedom and became the independent United States of America.

My opinion of the Revolutionary War is that it was a long lasting war and it was very complicated. At the end of the war, the American colonists had finally won their freedom.

My opinion of the Declaration of Independence is that I'm glad that they wrote it up and we have it, because we need it because of the rules.

***-- Tammy***



**A Day Fishing**

Once upon a time, on a morning so very early that you could probably even still see the stars in the sky, my friend (friend being my wife) and I decided to go fishing. We fished so long through that day. We had a nibble here and a nibble there, and once in a while, even a bite.

Later on during that day, out of nowhere, all of the poles we had brought bowed down. We must have had at least three bites. When we reeled them in, one was a flounder and one was a bass.

When we had started to reel them in, like always, we caught two and lost one. Of course, like always, the one we lost was the biggest one of all. Through all the bites, all the nibbles, all the food, we still caught the biggest fish of them all--to us. And that's just between me and you.

***-- Bobby***

We regret the passing of one of our students--

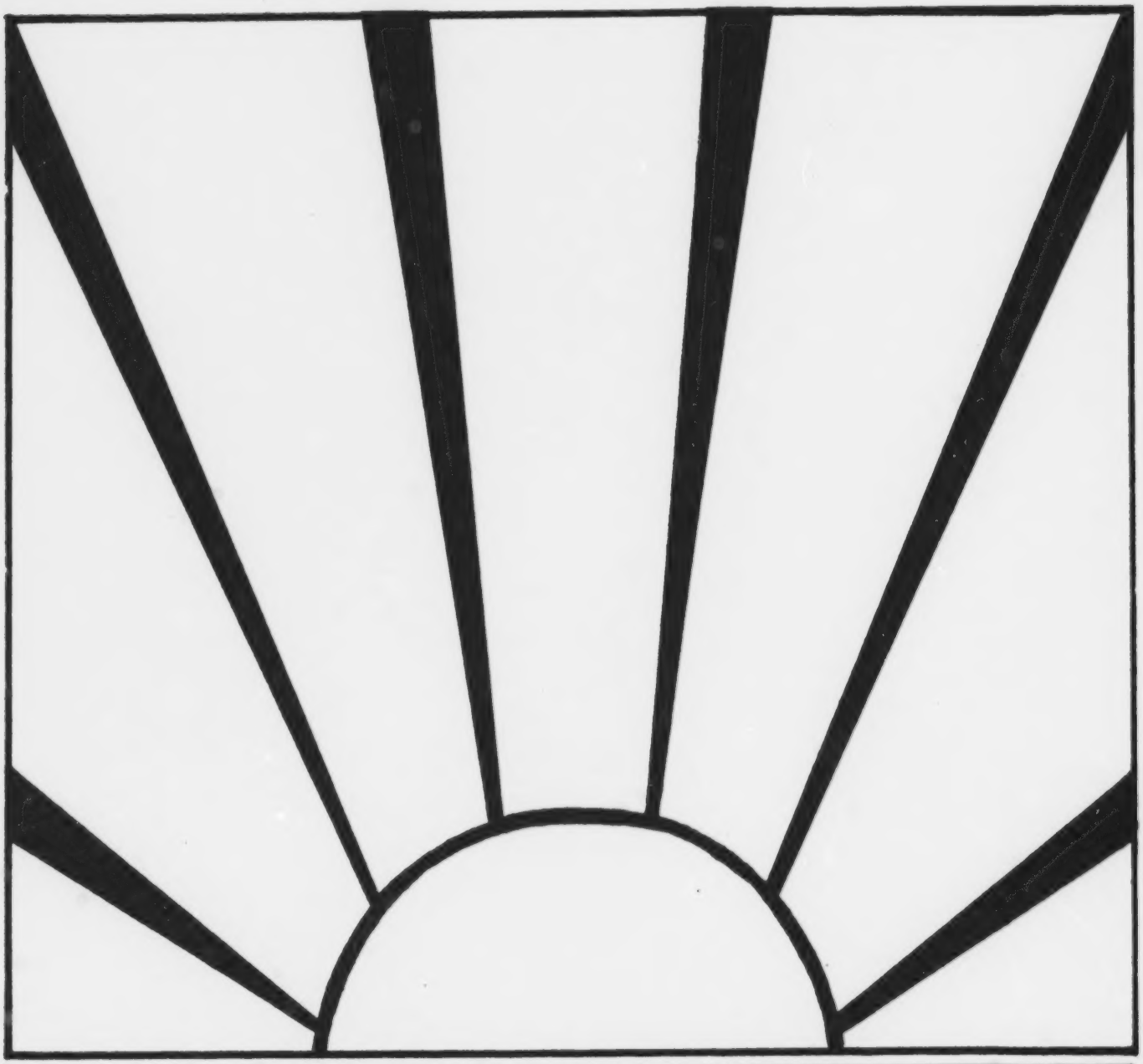
## Bernadette

I knew Bernadette for no more than six months; to know her was to love her. She was a senior citizen and so am I, but that was far from the only thing we had in common.

Her greatest desire before she met her Maker was to read to her grandchildren. I was privileged to be the tool that could enable her to fulfill this dream. She raised fifteen children and even more grandchildren. I asked her one day why she could not read. "Do you think I had time to learn to read?" She knew my answer. Our eyes met with our own secret love and understanding.

I did not have enough time to teach Bernadette to read or to write, but she taught me to love a bit deeper. You see, Bernadette and I were not the same color.

-- ***Louise Tutor***



# BRIGHTER HORIZONS

a journal comprised of the writings of participants in
Literacy Volunteers of America/Sterling Municipal Library

Baytown, Texas
No. 12, February 1990

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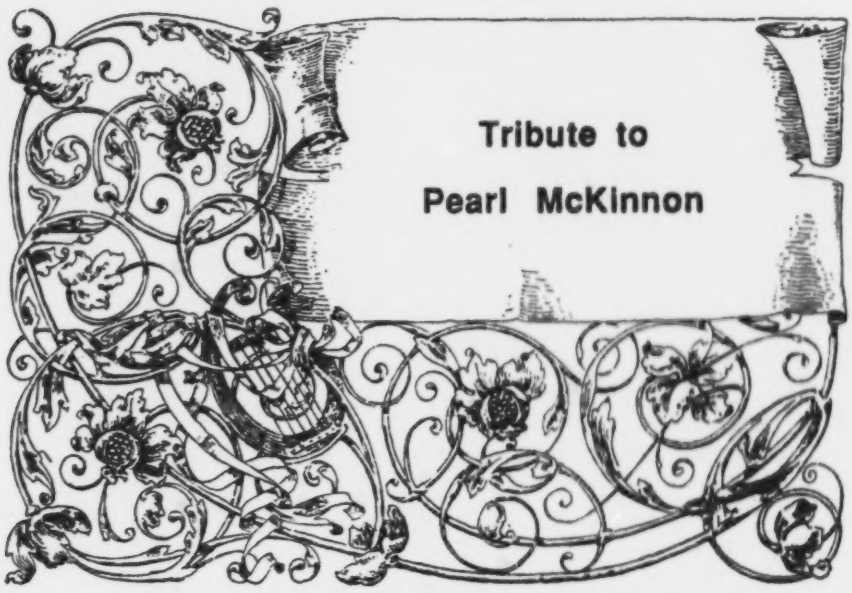



*(Pearl was a loyal tutor who volunteered two years as a tutor.*

*She passed away in December. Arthur was her student prior to her illness.)*

Mrs. McKinnon was a very kind, understanding teacher.

She was always prompt and thorough in teaching the skills.

Religion was foremost in her life--she came often to class, weary from delivering food to the needy.

One of her children was deaf, so she had lots of experience teaching. She brought a book of 'sign language' once and tried to teach me. I never learned it.

Baytown lost a super humanitarian, teacher, and mother when we lost Pearl McKinnon. She will be sorely missed.

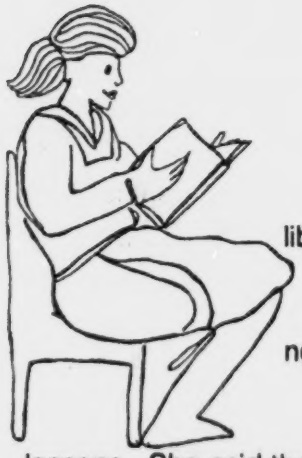
***-- Arthur***

## About LVA

One day I watched the "Kate & Allie" program. They talked about how they tried to help an Italian maintenance man who could speak, but couldn't read. At the end of the program, the First Lady, Barbara Bush, talked about the illiteracy in America. She did not necessarily refer to people from other countries. Abouf one in three American adults cannot read and understand. She introduced the "LVA Program" and gave information, which was how I got into this program.

I am glad I had a chance to discover this program. I would like to thank all the LVA staff, especially my tutor, Ms. Martha Dobrovolsky. She helps me a lot.

***-- Judy***



## Too Busy to Help

Sometimes I can't remember all my lessons from at the library until I get to work on them at home.

I get so frustrated when I can't figure out a word and there's no one there to tell me what it is.

Last week I asked my sister to help me with my reading lessons. She said that she was too busy since she had started working.

A few nights ago, I cleared a place at the kitchen table to work on my reading homework. After a while, I asked my wife to come and tell me what a word was. She said, "Not right now, I'm busy." She was reading a magazine. I told her I hope to be able to read a magazine myself someday.

When I get to be a good reader I want to help someone else to learn to read.

***-- Curton***

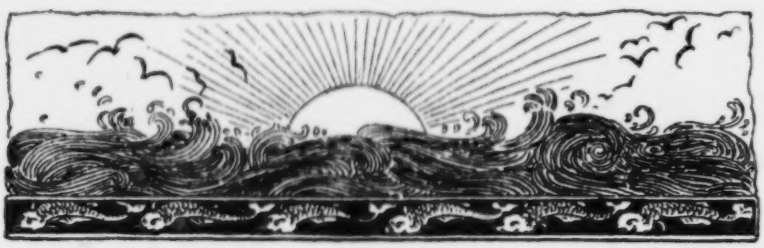
## Regrets

My name is Joe and I want to learn to read and write better. My story is about when I was young. I played in school all the time. I did not listen. I attended the tenth grade in high school, but in high school I did not know how to spell.

I went out as a seaman when I was 17 1/2 years old. I liked it. I went all over to places. I learned a lot. I know a lot but I cannot spell and write about it. I know I hurt my mother and father because I didn't go to school. I didn't feel sorry enough about not being able to spell and write.

God will help me if I ask Him to because He helps us all the time. When we are bad He forgives us all the time and we still do hurt Him. I know it is tough and rough not to be able to write good.

-- *Joe*



## What is Zydeco?

I like to listen to my music every morning. But the thing I really love to do is play Zydeco music.

Zydeco music was started in Louisiana by a man named Clifton back in the 1930's. Clifton played accordion and his brother played the scrub board.

Zydeco music is different from other music because of the instruments you use. For instance, you have your scrub board and your accordion as the two main instruments in Zydeco. But you do have your drum, guitar and bass in Zydeco, too.

The band I play with is a Zydeco band and the instrument I play is a scrub board. The name of the band is the Zydeco Two Steps.

The other band members are my older brother, who plays the accordion, and my baby brother, who plays the drums, and the lead vocalist is my dad. The rest of the band members are my cousin, who plays the bass, and my two friends, who play the guitar.

We have been playing for two years all over Louisiana and Texas. I enjoy playing with the band because I meet a lot of interesting people.

***-- Mark***

## The Bet

*(This is a student's summary of Anton Chekhov's short story "The Bet.")*

A young lawyer and a banker made a bet that the lawyer couldn't live 15 years in solitary confinement. The bet was for two million roubles and on Nov. 14, 1870, it was a lot of money.

The lawyer had a rough time at first, but as the years passed he read many books and the last book was the Bible. The banker was losing a lot of money. The day before the bet was to be over, he looked and saw he only had the two million left. He went out to kill the lawyer so he wouldn't have to pay the bet. But the lawyer wrote a note about everything that he saw, where he had been and what he had done in the books he read.

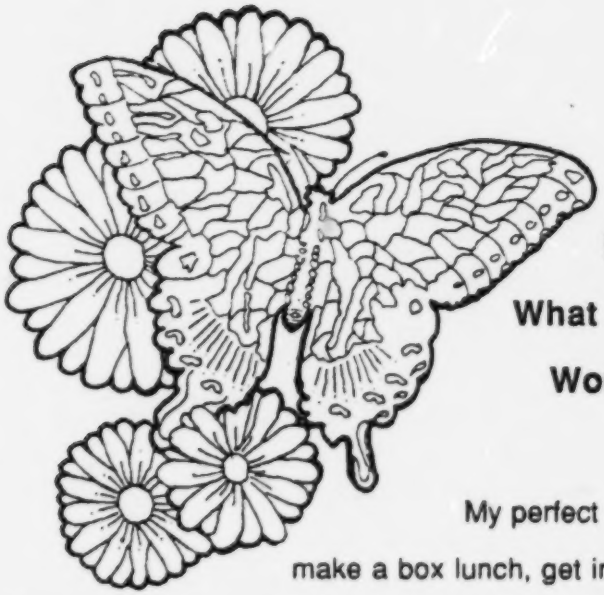
He learned life is more important than money, to enjoy beauty!, to think!, to learn!, to grow wise! So the next day he left two hours before the bet was due. The banker was proud he won, but the lawyer won more.

-- ***Barbara***

## The "Silent E" Rule

I have practiced reading for over one year and wasn't having much luck until I watched the "Learning to Read" film, which made me understand that when the final "E" was silent it made the vowel in front of it long, and say its name. It's still not easy, but it helps more than anything else has for me.

-- ***Arvis***



## Describe What a Perfect Day Would Be to Me

My perfect day would be to clean the house, make a box lunch, get in the car and drive to the country. I would walk around and smell the clean air, see all the beautiful wildflowers, the butterflies, and the ladybugs. I would lie down in the grass and listen to the different kinds of birds singing. The peacefulness makes my heart full of joy.

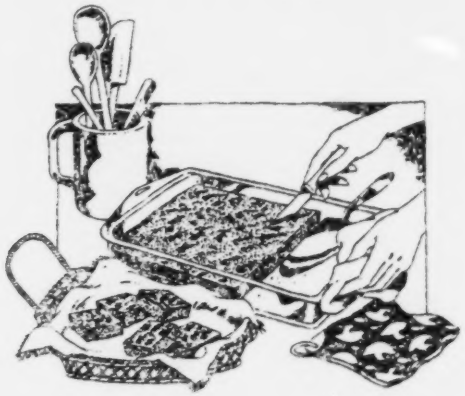
*-- G. P.*

## Going to a Bazaar

We went to the bazaar Sunday and each child had ten dollars apiece. There were seven grandchildren with me. They played a lot of games and rode the rides. And they were so concerned that I didn't have any money to spend.

When they did win something they wanted to give it to me to make up for it. They spent their money very carefully. They even had some money left which they used for lunch money.

They tried their best to win a cake, but they didn't and we ended up making one at home which they enjoyed because they helped make it.



-- *G. P.*

## The Haunted House

In 1936, at age seventeen, I hired on at a big plantation six miles out of White Castle, Louisiana, for the fall harvest. It had at least 2500 acres of land and needed about 500 men and women for the harvest.

Several families lived on the farm. My brother Edward was one of them, and he told me about the job. So I caught the TP train to White Castle and another train for the six-mile ride to the plantation.

We were paid $1.25 a day, and could sleep in their quarters at their camp. We had to buy our own food and do our own cooking.

The plantation had been handed down through several generations. The present owner had built a new, big, modern home for his family. The old antebellum home of his ancestors was still standing, with everything in it, but not being used.

I asked some of the other people there why.

"Oh, it's haunted," they all said.

"Why? What happened?" I asked.

"Somebody was murdered there," one man told me.

"Well, how do they know it's haunted?"

"We heard that the last person who tried to stay in there saw ghosts, and haints, and a bunch of ropes and things."

I didn't believe in ghosts. I thought about it and decided to stay there that night. I went into the house, and everything was all right. It was nice and everything was pretty.

I cooked supper in the kitchen and bathed before bedtime. I said a prayer to the Blessed Mother and then God's Prayer and went to bed. I slept fine.

The next morning the boys asked me, "Where were you last night?"

"I slept in the old plantation house."

"What!" one of them almost shouted. "And nothing happened?"

"No," I told him. "I slept like a baby."

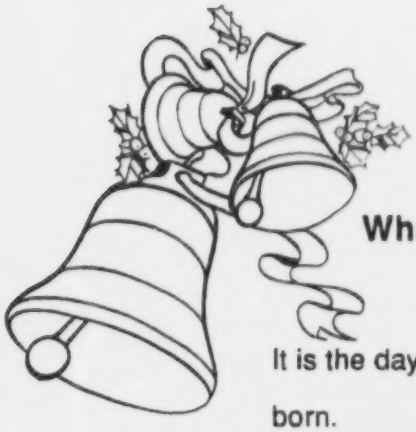
"Man, you could have got $500 for sleeping in that house. Nobody else dares to."

"Well, I don't know what happened to the other guys, but I sure slept nice in that big bed."

I worked there for about two and a half months, and I enjoyed that house. It was wonderful for me, and I stayed in it until the harvest was over. Nothing ever bothered me or scared me.

I wonder sometimes what really happened to cause the story that the house was haunted.

-- ***Eugene***



## What Christmas Means to Me

It is the day when our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, was born.

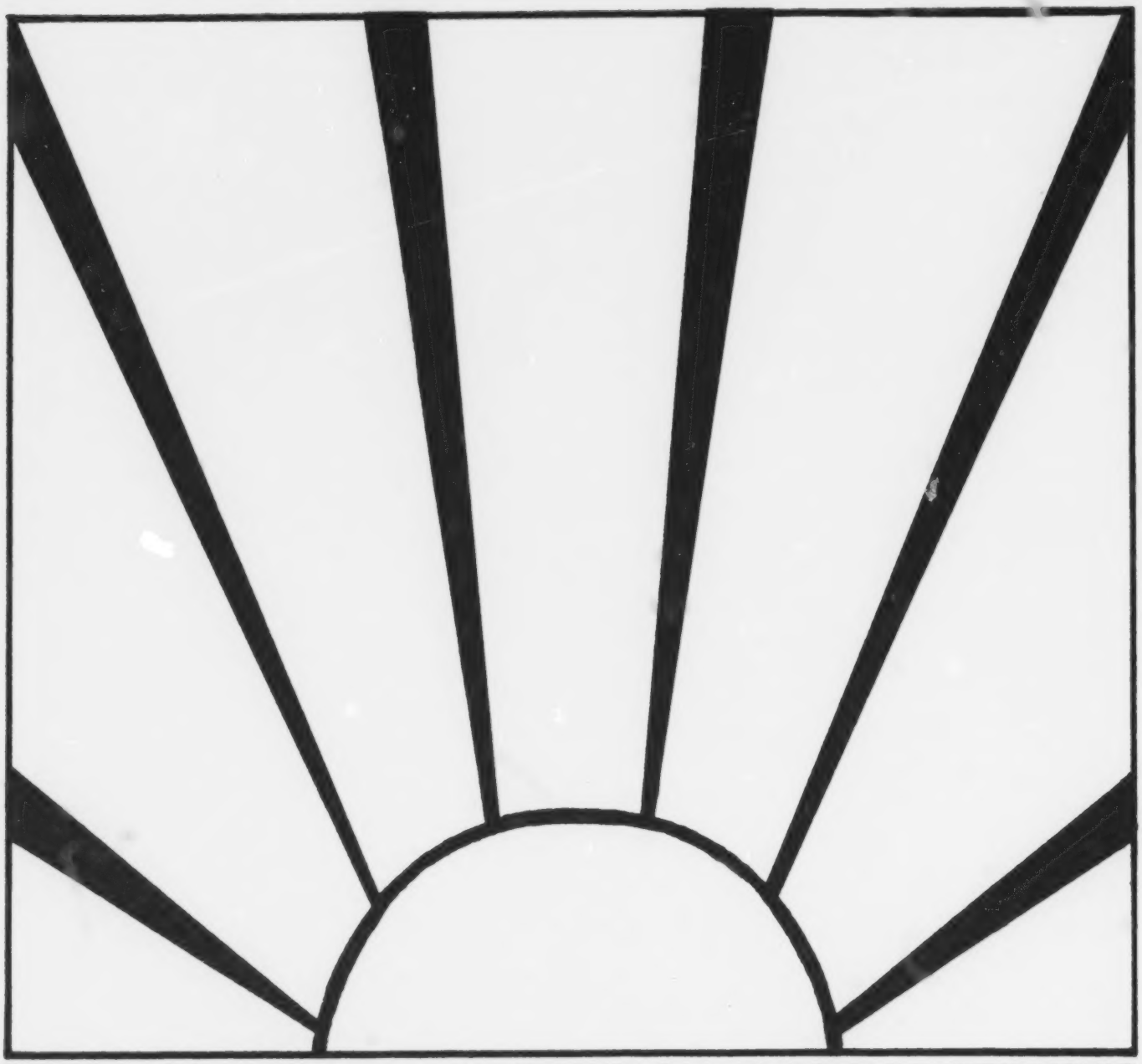
God gave His only begotten son to this world that we might all be saved.

It is the day when families come together to give their gift of love and affection to one another.

It is seeing the wonderful expression of joy on my children's faces when they open their presents on Christmas day and when they tell you how much they love you.

It is the most glorious day of the year.

***-- Ed***



# BRIGHTER HORIZONS

a journal comprised of the writings of participants in
Literacy Volunteers of America/Sterling Municipal Library

Baytown, Texas
No. 13, April 1990

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## A Trickster Story: The Texas Armadillo and the Tourist Dog

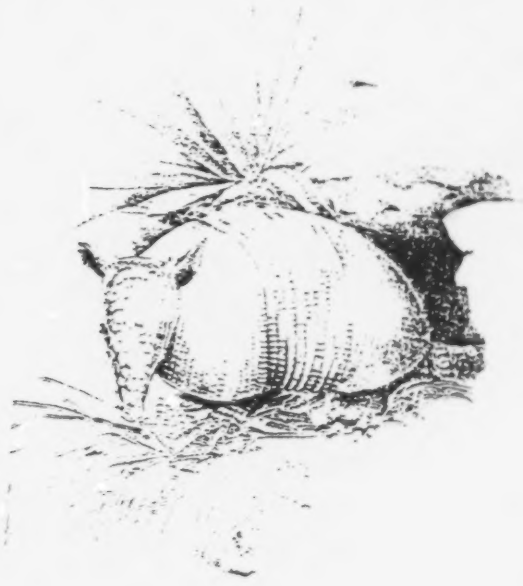
The Texas Armadillo was away from home, and when he decided to go across the bridge, he met the Tourist Dog. He was afraid he couldn't outrun the dog and couldn't dig a hole on the bridge to hide in. He knew the dog would try to eat him.

So he said to the dog, "Don't eat me. You are a stranger here and you want to be able to find the best Texas food. Let me take you home with me. My friend, who is staying with me, has won first prize in the Great Texas Chili Dog Cook-off, and he's much better tasting than I."

Now the Tourist Dog didn't know what to make of that, but it sounded good and he followed the Texas Armadillo home. The little armadillo scooted in ahead of him and was safe at last because the dog was too big to fit in the hole.

P. T. Barnum said, "There's a sucker born every minute," and I reckon one of them came to visit Texas.

-- ***Jessie***



## Story About Amelia Earhart

She went to school to learn to fly an airplane. Miss Guest owned an airplane. She wanted a woman to fly the plane across the Atlantic Ocean. Miss Guest called Captain Hilton Railey. Captain Railey asked Amelia to fly across the Atlantic. She was excited about the adventure. During the flight the wings iced over and she almost crashed, but she made it safely. She was the first woman to fly across the Atlantic alone.

-- ***Henley***

## The Morning Ghosts

It was on a Monday morning about 6:00 when I had tried to get out of my bed. All of a sudden, something pushed me back down. I was really scared that I could not move my body at all. So I tried to open my eyes, but I could not. I tried to get up again, but whatever it was was real strong. So I started to pray. Then my eyes started to open and I saw it was two dark shadows pulling my body onto the floor. I tried to fight them, but that made it worse. I tried to call my brother, but they would not let me. So I started to pray harder for them to let me go and they did.

It was about 6:45 when my alarm clock went off for me to go to work.

-- ***Mark***

## A Learning Experience

Today is Saturday. I try to teach my daughters how they can use the washing machine. It is the second time that I have tried. I don't know why they don't like to work at home. All the time when I ask for help, they help me, only they are angry and fight all the time. I try to explain to them that it is necessary to know a lot of things in this life. They listen, but I think that after a few seconds they forget. This time I tell them that they need to do different work every weekend, and they don't like it.

-- ***Teresa R.***

## The Polluted World

Pollution plays a big role in a lot of people's lives. Air pollution comes from factories, chemical plants, and cars. The air is what people breathe in and out. Polluted air gives some people cancer.

Some water we drink is polluted. This can be caused by oil spills, toxic waste, or by dumping trash in the water. This is what causes a lot of fish and other living species to die.

I wish I could invent a machine to stop pollution for the people of the world.

***-- Mark***

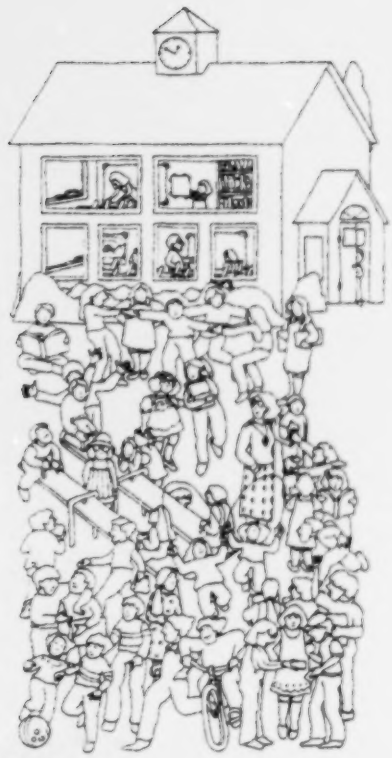
## Sometimes I'm Lonely

I have lived in the United States since 1976. I came from Mexico. I live here with my husband and three children. I have a beautiful family, but sometimes I feel so lonely because I do not have more family here, like parents, brothers, and sisters.

I miss them--especially my mother. I grew up close to all of my family. They lived close to me. They are all special persons. I hope to go to Mexico very soon to visit my family.

-- ***Teresa R.***

## Remember When



Remember when the first day of school was mostly doing nothing except meeting friends and everybody again?

We used to go out and swing at recess, playing marbles for keeps, throwing pennies at a line. The winner was whoever got closest to the line.

Our classroom was big with lots of windows, not air conditioned. It was hot. It had two blackboards in it. I always hated to be called on to go up to the blackboard.

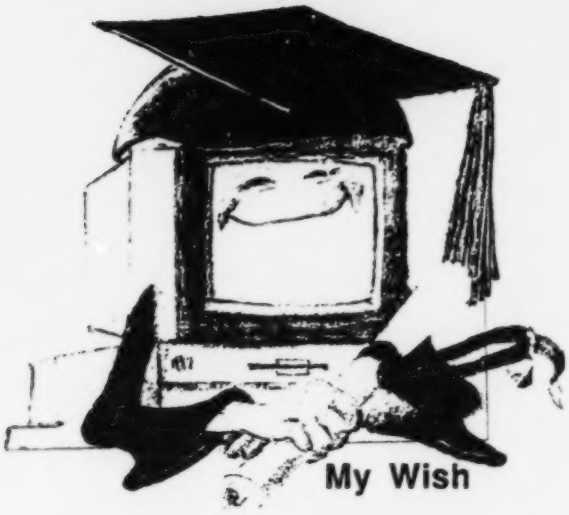
In the cafeteria you just got whatever they cooked. You didn't pick out anything.

My friend and I sat toward the back. I didn't like to get up and go sharpen my pencil. I didn't want to be noticed.

At recess we just played. When school began again, I'd just get back off in the room and kind of hide.

I tell my children all the time to pay attention and listen because you can't learn anything with your mouth open. Learn as much as you can because there are no more jobs like I have. Everything now is going to computers and electronics. Common labor work is gone.

-- *C. B.*



## My Wish

My wish is to reach a goal. My wish is that I can complete my high school equivalency test, and to further my education. When I reach my goal, and receive my G.E.D. diploma, then my plan is to continue my education through Lee College.

My first priority is to enroll in Lee College. My wish is to take a computer class. But before I continue the computer course, I must take a Reading Skills semester course. When I have completed this course, then I will continue on a microcomputer course--that is, a beginner's course. After that I must keep taking every step in computers until I can learn and reach my goal as a full credit course. Then I will be able to find a better job.

My wish is to find a job with a large company in office computers where I can work from 9 to 5 and be off on weekends and every special holiday!

Then my wish is that I would be able to thank everybody that was involved in helping me get through this crisis and reach my goal of my education.

I guess what I would like to say is "Thank you."

***-- Lucy***

## Thoughts in the Night

It is midnight. I am awake with my son. He is a little better; the fever is going down. Now he is asleep.

I'm alone with him. The night is so silent. I don't know why I am writing at this time. Maybe I want to talk with somebody. I don't feel like I can rest, and I don't feel sleepy. I only feel tired.

Now my dog is barking. Some nights he barks a lot. I don't like pets. I have this dog because of my children. They like any kind of pet. They love Frisky a lot. That is the reason I have a pet in my house. Sometimes I feel tired of him. When he is lost, I have problems with the neighbors. I don't like having problems with anybody.

Now it is raining and the wind is a little hard. I have spent one hour writing these lines. I think it is enough for now.

(Thank God my son is better.)

-- ***Teresa R.***

## Planting a Garden

Last month we planted a garden. We had to roll a tiller and put sand, cow manure and lime. Then we had to roll the tiller again to make the dirt soft. Then we went through with the tiller to make mounds. We then put the seeds in. We have onions, mustard greens, turnips, some tomatoes and beets, and green peppers and cucumbers. I still have to get green beans and zucchini. We pick them and clean them and give some to my sister or whoever wants them. I can the beets.

-- ***Theresa McD.***

AMERICA

## From Immigrant to Citizen

My name is Bertha Alicia. I want to read and speak and write English very well. My story is about when I came to the U.S.A. for the first time.

Sometimes I don't want to remember the big problem all the aliens had when we came here. The English language is a big, big problem. The U.S.A. is like a jungle because we do not know what we have to do, to think and to speak.

But now I am glad because even if I don't speak very well, now I understand. Now I am speaking English with my tutor Kathy. She is a very kind and understanding teacher. I told her all of my problems, and I hope she is going to help me to read and speak English by myself someday. When I get to be a good reader, I want to help someone else to learn everything I do.

I am now an American citizen, thanks to God. He helped me a lot in my decision to refuse my country's citizenship; but I think it is good for the people who want to progress and help their families. I know that life is more important than money, but we are here.

Thanks, U.S.A.

-- ***Bertha***

## Sweepstakes

If I won the sweepstakes, I would buy myself a Chevrolet truck and a mini van for Mama. I'd pay all my bills and put money for each one of my children in a savings account to go to college. It would take quite a bit to go to college.

I would probably build myself a new house. It would have four bedrooms, two baths, and I'd put in a den and living room, a kitchen, and a two-car garage. It would all be on one floor so Beverly couldn't fall down the stairs and hurt herself.

I'd get Beverly a 20 inch bicycle that she could ride on in the backyard, not on the street.

-- *C. B.*

## My Land

I bought my land five years ago. I would love to move onto it, but it would take a lot of money to move. I hope I can move this summer. It seems like I never have enough money to move. It takes about three thousand dollars for a septic system and three thousand dollars for a water well and two hundred dollars deposit for lights.

I like it out there because it is so peaceful and quiet. I have five acres of land and no one lives beside me.

Living out there in the country has a few bad points. It is a long way to work and a long way to the grocery store, but I was raised in the country and these things didn't bother me back then. I have lived in the city for eight years, and I am ready to move back to the country.

***-- Olson***

## My Friend

I met my friend Melba while working at the flower shop, where I am now employed. We have so much in common and seem to become very good friends right away. Melba is very attractive, a kind and gentle person, and she has a warm heart.

Melba is sixty years old. She has silver gray hair, blue eyes, and a medium size body build. She dresses very well and uniquely. She just bought a new car last year; she trades cars every two years.

She loves to travel, and has been to different countries and states. I love to hear her tell all about her adventures. We also travel together a lot. We would drive to Galveston and tour around the Galveston Historic Homes. We would drive out to the country sight seeing.

Her hobbies are sewing, reading, arts and crafts, and she also likes to go shopping in the mall.

I lived with her for a year before I could find my own apartment. She would even drive me to Bishop, Texas below Corpus Christi to see my family.

Now that she retired a few years ago, she moved back to East Texas. She bought a mobile home out in the country and enjoys her retirement life. She works in her garden and grows beautiful vegetables--tomatoes and corn and mustard greens.

Every time I go to see her she cooks all those good greens and cornbread. Every time I think about it my mouth waters because she's a good cook.

Now she's taken quilting lessons and made me a beautiful quilt. We still keep

in touch and I guess she will always be there for me.

She is a great friend, that anybody would like to have.

-- ***Lucy***

## Easter Sunday

My sister Herminda, my niece, my nephews, a friend and her family, my brother Sabas, my son Jorge, and I went to the park for Easter Sunday. My sister-in-law and her two girls and one boy were also there with me. A total of 15 people were there.

We were at the park in Clear Lake by the bay. We all arrived at 10:00 a.m. It took us about 30 minutes to get there. We stayed all day long. We went home after 5:00 p.m.

First, we had to find a place because it was crowded. A man told us we could use one of his tables. After, we started setting up the barbeque pit to cook some fajitas (meat). While the food was cooking, the children went to the water and they also played with the birds. The adults were talking and cooking the food.

My niece had taken off her shoes and was playing barefoot. The ground was muddy and she went everywhere. She cut her foot and was bleeding a lot. I looked at her foot and washed it and squeezed some drops of lemon on her cut because I didn't have anything else. This stopped the bleeding and she was fine. I put her shoes back on and she went off to play again.

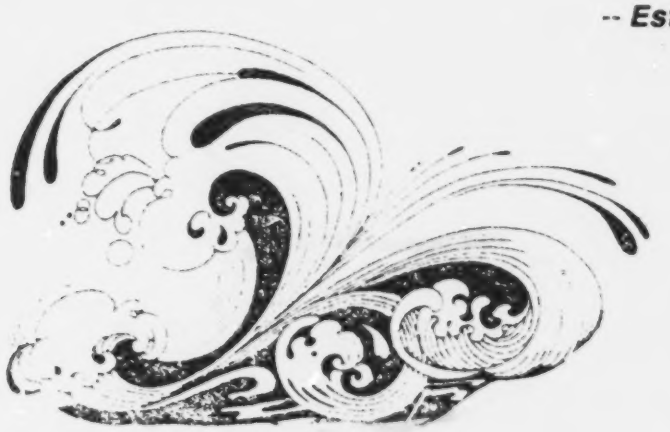
After we ate, the children and the ladies went for a walk and the men stayed to talk. The children wanted to go for a ride in the boat, but the man told us it was $5.00 a person to ride. So we didn't go in the boat. We kept on walking.

After we got back to our table, the children went to play in the playground again and the ladies kept an eye on them.

When I looked up they were all in the water. I yelled at them to get out. They got out and went to their mothers. They had to stay wet because there were no extra clothes to change. Jorge had to stay with me for the rest of the afternoon. He didn't like that. But I didn't want him sick, so I made him stay there with me.

Everyone had fun. Everyone ate a lot. Everyone was tired at the end of the day. Maybe we will go back to that park in the summer.

***-- Esther***



## "Royal Reader"

I was "Royal Reader" at Lamar Elementary for the second grades. There were four classes present. I read Arthur's Eyes by Marc Brown.

Mrs. Clark introduced me. I was dressed in a robe and crown and sat on the "Royal Reader" throne. The Baytown Sun took my picture with three of the students.

The classes said I was their best reader yet and it was a very good experience for me. I hope they invite me back next year.

-- ***Arthur***

THE BAYTOWN SUN Sunday, April 29, 1990 7-A

**"Families Reading Together"**

**at**

**Carver Elementary**

## Teresa's Story

My name is Teresa. My story is about when I was young. I never had an opportunity to go to school because there were no schools to attend. I wish I had gone to school because an education is very important in life. If I had gone to school, I would have helped my children. Now I have an opportunity to learn to write and read better. I appreciate all the help from my teacher. She has helped me very much.

***-- Teresa H.***

## A Beautiful Experience

I have two children, Mario and Laura. When they were little, I wasn't interested in any kind of English program. But now my children are in school. They always need my help.

When the G. W. Carver Elementary School gave me the opportunity in the "Families Reading Together" program, I immediately accepted. Now we have the beautiful experience of learning together. I love this kind of program because it also helps me to have more positive communication with my children.

I know that education is the most important thing in any part of the world.

-- ***Maria***

## Kids, Kids, Kids

Kids,
Kids,
Good kids,
Pretty kids,
Noisy, busy, working kids,
Smiling, singing, playing kids -
These are just a few.
Sad kids,
Happy kids,
Jumping, running, dirty kids,
Quiet, sleeping, clean kids,
Crying kids, too.
Fighting kids,
Eating kids,
Don't forget reading kids,
Last of all, best of all,
I like MY kids.

-- ***Rebecca***

## My Desire

I want to talk to you about my desire. My most important eagerness is to learn to speak, write and read the English language correctly. It is very important when living in this country, especially in the communication with my children, their teachers and the school principal, and to help them with questions and problems in the school.

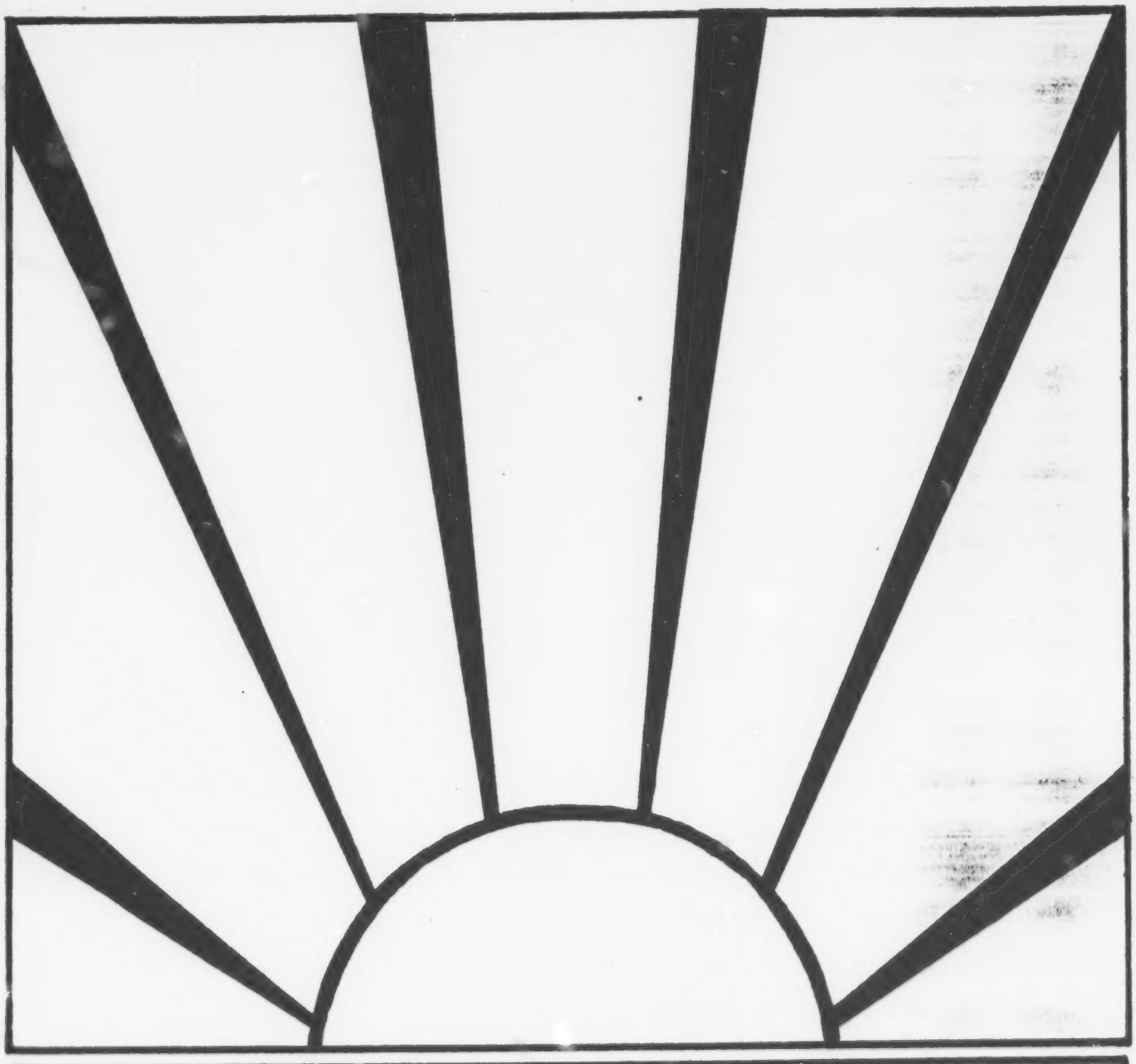
I trust in God and the people who are helping me to learn English. They have given me their time and the courage. I would also like to thank my tutor and every teacher and especially to Mrs. Denise Fischer for giving us her cooperation in this program.

-- ***Martha E.***

## My Dream

My dream has always been to be able to speak and write English well. I have lived in Baytown for many years and in all those years I have never really thought that knowing English was that important to me. Now that I know that, a second language, it helps me a lot. I am trying hard to learn. I still think it is not too late to learn.

-- ***Jesus H.***



# BRIGHTER HORIZONS

a journal comprised of the writings of participants in
Literacy Volunteers of America/Sterling Municipal Library

Baytown, Texas
No. 14, July 1990

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This issue was made possible through

U. S. Department of Education
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R167A90115

# Spot's Skunk Adventure

by C. B.

One night about midnight, in the middle of the winter in Hankamer, there was a dog named Spot. He weighed 40 pounds. He was black with white spots on his back. Spot had big, sharp teeth that he liked to use to chew up people's shoes.

There was a skunk getting into the garbage. Spot ran over to chase the skunk away. The skunk sprayed Spot, and he barked and howled and woke up Dad and nobody could breathe.

Dad got his shotgun and shot the skunk in the head. Dad took the skunk off and threw him in the river.

Dad sprayed Spot with perfume, and Spot learned his lesson and never chased skunks again.

## My New Car
**by Mark**

It was a Saturday morning when I went car shopping. I was not really looking for a car, but a truck. But by the next Thursday, I ended up with a black GTX Escort.

When I got the new car, I had to take my music out of the old car. After I got through showing it to my family, I drove around to show it to my friends.

That night I couldn't sleep at all. It was about 3:00 a.m. that Friday morning when my family got out of bed to go out of town. My father told me to pull my new car into the garage. Then I could not go back to sleep. I got up out of bed, went into the garage, got in my car, and went to the car wash at 3:30 that morning. By the time I pulled back into the garage and wiped it down, I could only lie down for an hour before work. But I went to work anyway and was not even tired.

## The Trouble I Had Getting an Education
**by Peggy**

When I was young, I don't know what happened, but I did not learn to read very well. Even my family didn't know how bad I was in reading. I made fair grades in school. How I really did it, I don't know. I can remember guessing a lot on tests.

I quit school and got married. My husband did not know I could not read very well. We were together about five years. We got a divorce.

My son and I came to Houston, Texas to work. I did okay, but had to work lots of long hours to make a living for us.

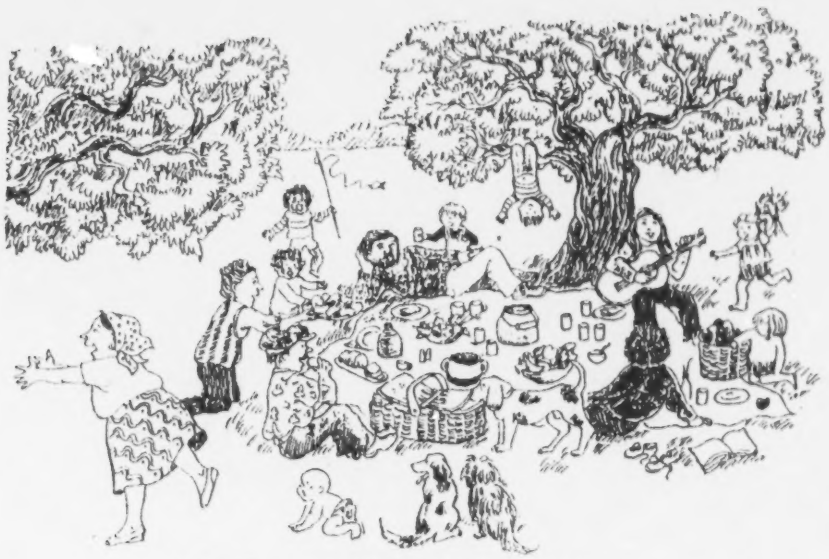
Seven years later, I met Wesley and we had a son named Scott. Wesley had a small business out of his home. I started to help run it. He would always get onto me because I could not take messages very well. He's the only one that noticed that I couldn't read or write very well.

When my son Scott was three years old, he broke his leg. I began to read to him to keep him quiet. I think then Wesley realized I couldn't read that well. I had trouble reading the children's books.

I have a son named Mark who cannot read very well. I blamed it on myself because I couldn't read very well. The school told me that he is doing okay. I don't agree. He is getting by just like I did.

I decided to try to look for some classes for adults. I asked everywhere about them. I spent many hours on the phone looking for a class that could help me. It was hard at first to say to people I did not know that I could not read very well. I went to many different places where they had adult classes. I found two that I thought would help me. One was at a college. It was basic reading skills. One was at the library in Baytown. I am still in the reading course in Baytown. It has helped a lot, but I still have a long way to go to be able to read like I would like.

It is hard for me because of my family and Wesley complaining about the time that I spend in class or studying for class. You would think that he would want me to learn and help me, but he does not. I am determined to read and write better and I am not letting anyone stop me.



## Mother's Day in Mexico

**by Teresa R.**

May 10th is Mother's Day in Mexico. That day is very special for all the people. The people there have their mothers spend the day with them. If their mother is no longer living, they go to the cemetery and put flowers on her grave.

For all the schools, it is "party day." The schools have special programs for all the students and their mothers. The children write poems for their mothers.

May 10th is a very special day for all the Mexican mothers.

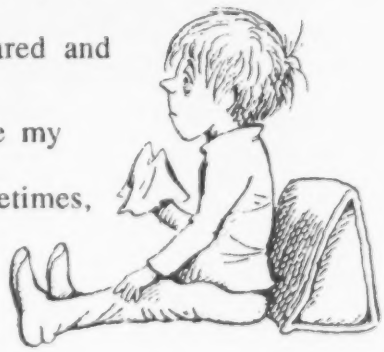
## One Terrible Week

**by Teresa R.**

This week was terrible for me. My car was broken and my son was sick. The doctor said that he needed to stay in the house for two or three days.

I don't like these days. I especially hate it when I see my son in bed. My special days are when I see my children playing outside.

When my children are sick I feel sad and scared and so lonely. I don't know why I feel that way. I have my husband and my children and I am so happy. Sometimes, I think that my family is the best. I think and I feel that way.



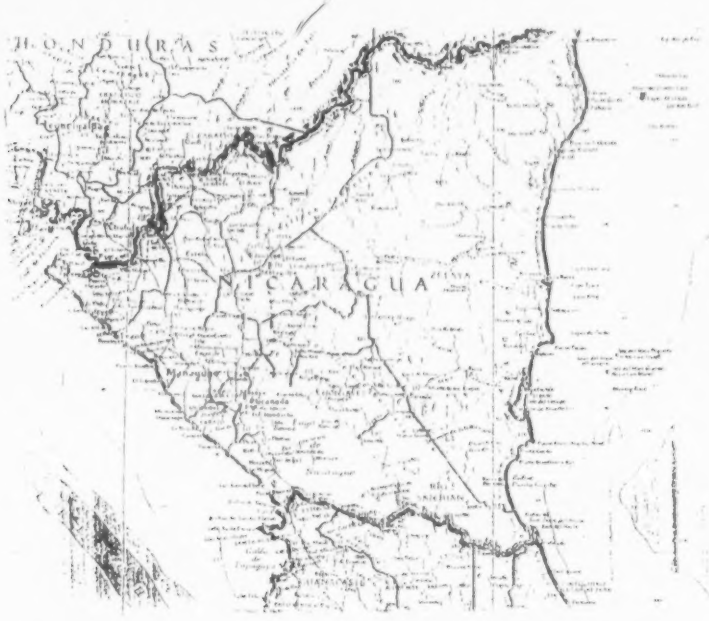
## My Home Land
by C. A.

My country, Nicaragua, is beautiful. The beaches are white and the water is clear. There are many palm and papaya trees.

The food vendors are funny because they tell you everything is very good to eat. The people are friendly.

I went to a town called Masaya. I looked around the laguna and saw so many trees. On the other side of the laguna is a big inactive volcano. Inside the volcano you can see all kinds of birds and parrots.

I feel good when I remember the beauty of Nicaragua.



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## My Children
by Teresa R.

I have three children, two girls and one boy. They are very good children. I don't have any problems with them.

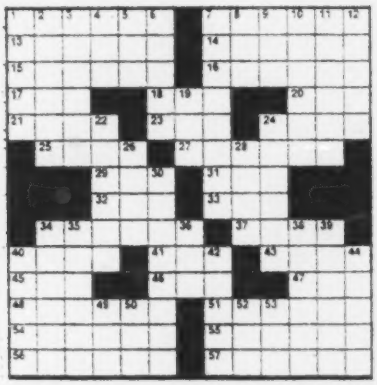
They ask me questions. Sometimes it is hard for me to answer them. We talk a lot when they want. Sometimes they are so quiet, and that scares me.

They are too noisy, especially when they are all talking. They talk so loud, they make me crazy!

I love my children very much.

## Crossword Puzzles

**by Lucy**



Crossword puzzles seem to fascinate me. I love crossword puzzles. I could start one, but never could finish one at all. My vocabulary was so poor that I couldn't figure out what to do.

But I never gave up. I kept trying so hard at it. But at times, I would just cry. I found out that the more you try, the better vocabulary you have, and powerful words will come to mind.

I have such a great teacher now who has encouraged me with crossword puzzles. It has helped my vocabulary and word ability more than I can ever imagine. She has taught me to see a side of me that I never saw before. She is a great teacher.

Every now and then I still get a few hard crossword puzzles, but I keep working at them and, even if it takes me a week, I get them solved!

*[Editor's note: Lucy enjoys working the puzzles in the newspaper called "News for You." Copies are located on the tutor shelf.]*

## My Goal
**by Jackie**

It's important for a mother to know how to read and write, especially if she has young children; and I do. They're always asking questions about words and stories and asking how to spell a word. Also, someday if I want to find a job I would like, I'll need to know how to read and spell just to be able to get a job.

In the future I hope to learn enough so that I can get a G.E.D. certificate. From there, I'd like to work toward becoming a nurse. My learning to read in this course is the first step toward my goal, thanks to my tutor, who is helping me.

## Taking Drivers Tests

**by Barbara**

On June 29, 1990, I took the written part of my driving test and passed. I studied for three months. I was nervous, especially when a man officer gave me the test. He was very polite and nice. He carefully explained the questions, and I must go back in thirty days for the driving part of the test.

## Haikus
**by Lucy**

A silken vision

one of nature's miracles

song of cardinals

* * * * *

Our neighborhood tied

yellow ribbons welcoming

friends back home again.

* * * * *

America is

our country, our freedom, and

liberty for all.

* * * * *

Now that Santa Claus

has found a place in my heart

he can find yours, too.

* * * * *

Perfect harmony

my cat and the bird are pals

friends up in the tree.

* * * * *

Shona the doggie

will not stop fawning over

his good friend the deer.

## My Last Farm Job
**by Eugene**

In 1936, times were hard and jobs scarce. I was a farm hand, working for the people who raised me. I planted crops in the spring and harvested them in the fall. They paid me no wages for my work.

After their harvest, I would go to the cane harvest on the Murray plantation. The money I earned there was for my clothes. I made around a hundred dollars in the cane harvest.

The plantation had been in the Murray family for generations. Mr. Murray inherited it from his father, who had inherited it from his father and so on. They had 25 or 26 hundred acres, and owned more than one plantation. They raised corn and cane. They also had a store, or commissary, and a liquor store and dance hall. They had everything we would need.

The cane harvest was the best job for us young folks. Everybody on the plantation pitched in. There were a lot of women there, and they cut cane, too. Everybody worked.

Mr. Murray, up on a horse, rode around and looked. He had foremen over us, and they were on horses, too. They expected us to work, but nobody was mistreated. If some of the young ones didn't work, they were let go.

I had it real good. I used to help the people in the store on Saturdays and Sundays.

All the cane was cut and hauled by train to the refinery. Cane from all the plantations was carried through this particular refinery and made into sugar.

First they squeezed the juice, cooked it into syrup, then turned it into brown sugar. Next, they put it on a conveyor belt and took it upstairs to make granulated, or white, sugar. One man worked in the granulated room, which was very clean. Last, the sugar was bagged by machine. They took it from there to be distributed throughout the country.

It was all very hard work. I cut cane for the first two weeks, for $1.25 a day. Next, I worked on the derrick, loading cane onto flat cars for it to go to the refinery. I got a quarter increase in pay, making a dollar and a half for loading. I worked from can to can't, nine hours a day.

Sometimes in cold weather we would have to lay cane down, called a wind row, and cover it up to keep it from freezing. Then we had to pick it up, strip it and top it, and load it on a cart to be carried to the derrick to load it on the train.

I was treated very nice by the people who owned the plantation. There were about four or five hundred young men and women hired for

the cane cutting. We stayed there about two and a half months, from October 15 to after Christmas, according to how the harvest went. If we had good weather, good cutting, we would be through by Christmas. If it was freezing cold, we might not finish until January.

After the cane harvest, I went back home to wait to put in the spring crop for my foster parents.

Finally, a man told me one day, "You are getting to be a young man, and you are going to want to marry somebody's daughter one of these days. What I see is that nothing from nothing leaves nothing."

I was listening.

He went on. "You're working for your foster parents in the spring, summer, and fall. Then you go work for yourself in the winter. That's not making sense. If you can work all the winter in the cold for yourself, why can't you work all the spring and summer for yourself? One day you will want to stand on your own two feet and you won't be able to."

I was laying the spring crop by when he told me that. I thought about it. It kept bearing into my mind, and something told me to hit the road.

I went to New Orleans for my first labor job, and I never came back to farm another crop.

# FOLKTALES

RETOLD BY

"FAMILIES READING TOGETHER"
CARVER ELEMENTARY

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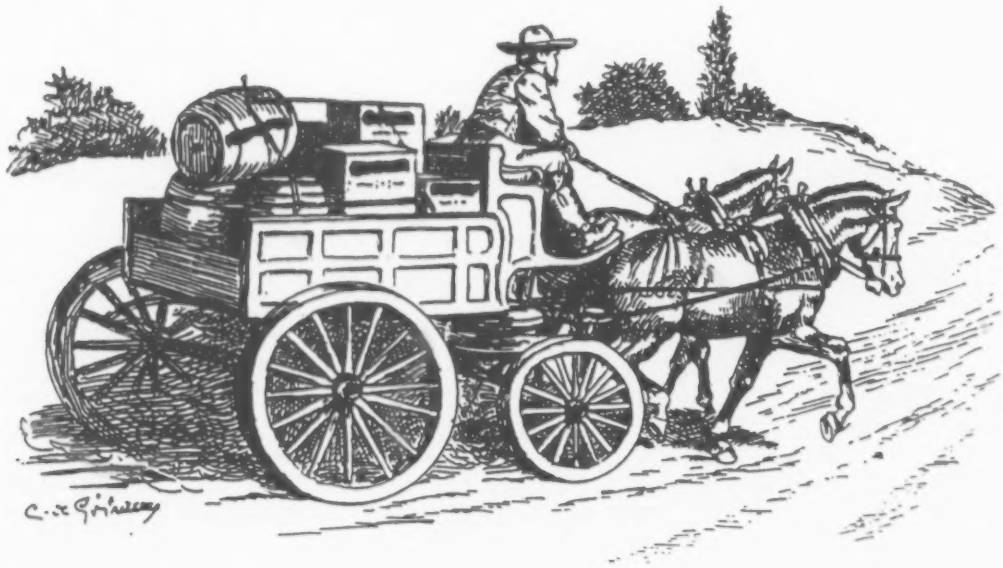
A TALE RETOLD BY
EMMA RAMOS

This is a folk story, a scary folk story, told to us when we were children by my mother. My mother grew up in a very small town in south Texas called Paulito Blanco. They traveled by horse and buggy wherever they had to go. There was one particular spot outside of Paulito Blanco that had a bridge on it, and it was crossed by everyone that needed to go from Paulito Blanco to another small town in the area. It was said that at night when people traveled across that bridge that you could always count on crossing the bridge and finding, when you reached the other side of the bridge, that someone had joined you and had crossed the bridge with you. The person would not speak--he made no sounds--but was very much right there riding with you while you crossed the bridge and stayed with you for another distance. And no one ever knew when he would disappear. Kind of scary, Huh????





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ANOTHER TALE TOLD BY
EMMA RAMOS

This is another. I don't remember it very well, but I remember a little bit about it. This young man went to a dance and danced with this beautiful girl that was at the dance hall. They danced all night, and he took her home. Because it was a cold night, he lent her his coat. He dropped her off at the driveway where she had indicated that she lived.

The next day he came back to the house to pick up his coat. He knocked on the door. The mother came to answer the door, and he asked to speak to Maria. (I'm going to say. I don't remember the girl's name). The mother said, "I don't understand."

So, he said, "Well, last night I was at a dance and I danced with Maria, and I brought her home, and I lent her my coat because it was too cold."

The mother said, "It can't be-- because my daughter died a year ago."

The man described the girl.
It fit the girl's description, and the mother said that it can't be,
" My daughter is dead." To prove it, she took him to the cemetery.
When they went out to where she was buried, guess what was on the tomb? His coat!

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UNA HISTORIA POR
REBECCA VALENCIA

Este era un señor que no estaba agusto porque su esposa no podía tener familia.

Un día muy enojado se salió por la tarde y dije,

--Ahora si me voy a traer al primer niño qué me encuentre.

Se salío y estuvo tomando toda la tarde. Y al regresar a su casa, si encontró a un bebito llorando tirado en la calle. Lo recojió y dijo:

--Ahora sí me voy a llevar a éste. Yo dijo que me iba a llevar al primero qué me encontrara.

Se fue el señor ; empezo a caminar con el bebito; y, cuando iba llegando a su casa, al bebito le empezaron a crecer muy grande las uñas.

Y empezo a rasguñar al señor. Y al señor se le disapareció el bebito de las manos. Llegó a su casa y le empezo a doler la cabeza. Y le empezo a doler seguido hasta que el señor murió.

TRANSLATION

There was a man who was not happy because his wife could not bear children. One day he became very angry. He went out in the evening saying, "I am going to bring back the first child that I find."

He drank all evening long. When he started to return to his house, he found a

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baby that had been left in the street and was crying. He picked him up and said, "I am going to take this one. I said I would take the first child I found."

He started walking home with the baby in his arms. As he neared his home, the baby's finger nails started to grow. They grew very long. The baby then started to scratch the man.

Suddenly, the baby disappeared from the man's arms. As he got to his house, his head began to ache. It continued to ache until the man died.



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UNA HISTORIA POR

CARMEN TORRES

Este es el cuento de la llorona. La llorona se dice que es una señora que mataba a sus niños cuando iban a nacer. Y cuando ella se murió, Dios Nuestro Señor no la acepto en el cielo y le dijo:

-Tu vas a regresar a la tierra y vas a penar.

Y de ahí es que en las noches, especialmente en las noches oscuras, donde no hay luz, o tal vez sea en la luna llena,... Yo no recuerdo bien. Este es un cuento que nos contaba mi abuelita para, para que nos ah, durmieramos en paz. Yo creo.

Y de ahí es que viene el cuento de que cuando se oye afuera que alguien llora se dice que es la llorona, porque llora por sus hijos y dice:

--¡Ay, mis hijos!

Y ese es el sonido que se hace! Y ese es muy famoso en el tiempo de, de el dia de los muertos en México, que se celebra el día primero de noviembre.**

Esta es una de las historias que se cuentan una y otra y otra y otra vez.

**El dia de los muertos se celebra el 2 de noviembre.

TRANSLATION

This is the story of the crying woman.

It is said that the crying woman would kill her babies when they were about to be born. When she died, God did not accept her in heaven. He told her she would have to do penance on earth.



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And from that moment on, at night, especially on a dark night when there is no light, you hear her crying. Or, maybe on a full moon; I don't remember very well. This is a story my grandmother would tell us so that we could sleep peacefully, I think.

This is where we get this tale. When you hear someone crying outside, it is said to be the crying woman crying for her children, wailing "Oh, my children." That is the sound she makes. This story is very popular in the time of the dead in Mexico. This is celebrated on the first of November.**

This is one of the stories that is told over and over again.

** The Day of the Dead is celebrated on November 2.

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UNA HISTORIA POR
DORA MARTINEZ

Esta es una historia que pasó en verdad. Es lo que contaba mi mamá.

Me contó mi mamá que mi abuelita tenía un niño que tenía, parece que 3 ó 5 años, no recuerdo bien; pero, dice mi mamá, que este niño todo los días se salía a jugar con otro niño. Pero mi abuelita no sabía con quien, con quien se iba. El niño siempre llevaba dos carritos: uno para él, y el otro para el, para el otro niño.

El siempre le pedía permiso a mi abuelita de ir a jugar con Jesús. El decía que iba a jugar con Jesūs.

Mi abuelita lo dejaba ir. Pero, mi abuelita nunca sabía donde era donde se iba.

"So," un día, a mi abuelita se le hizo raro que el niño salía todos los días. Entonces mi abuelita decidió seguir al niño a ver a dónde iba a jugar. El niño decía que iba a jugar con Jesús, pero mi abuelita no sabía con qué Jesús iba el niño a jugar.

Un dia mi abuelita lo siguio y mi abuelita se sorprendio bastante porque miro que el niño andaba jugando solito con un carrito y, pero miró que el otro carrito andaba trabajando solo, sin que nadie lo moviera. Entonces mi abuelia sorprendida se vino a la casa.

Cuando el niño llego le dijo a mi abuelita,

--!Ya vine, mamá!

Mi abuelita le preguento dónde estaba. Y el niño le dijo,

--Mamá, te dije que iba ir a jugar con, con Jesús, dijo. ?Y sabes, mamá? Me dijo que si me dejabas ir a su casa. El dice que allá donde el vive está muy bonito. !Déjame, mamá! !Déjame ir con él!

Entonces mi abuelita le contesto que no. Y el niño se puso muy malito. Y el



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niño sin, sin dar tiempo a que lo atendiera un doctor ni nada, el niño se puso muy malo; y el niño murió.

Entonces, esto quiere decir, esto quiere decir que el niño con él que el iba a jugar, era el Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, que es Dios, Nuestro Señor.

Este, el niño Jesús se llevó al niño, que fue el que hizo que el niño enfermara. Y el niño se murio. Y así es cómo El lo recojió. Y se lo llevó con El. Es todo.

TRANSLATION

This is a true story. My mother used to tell it to us. She said my grandmother had a little boy who was 3 or 5 years old. I don't remember which. This little boy would go out every day and play with another little boy. But my grandmother did not know who it was that he played with.

The little boy always took 2 toy cars with him, one for himself and the other for the other little boy.

He always asked his grandmother's permission to go play with Jesus. He always said he was going to play with Jesus. My grandmother would let him go but she never knew where he went.



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One day, she thought it strange that the little boy would go out to play every day. she decided to follow her little one and see where he went to play. He would always say he went to play with Jesus. But grandmother did not know with which Jesus he would play.

She followed him and was very surprised to find that her boy was playing by himself with one of his toy cars and that the other toy car was moving all by itself. No one was touching it. She then went home.

When the little boy got home, he exclaimed, "I'm home, mother." Grandmother asked him where he had been. He replied, "Mother, I told you I was going to play with Jesus. And you know, mother, he asked if you would let me go to his house. He says it's beautiful where he lives. May I, Mother? May I go with him? "

My grandmother answered, "No."

The little boy became very ill. And without giving time for a doctor to be called, he grew worse and died.

This must mean that the little boy with which her child played was the Lord Jesus. And that he allowed the little boy to become ill and then took him home to live with him.

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Photos by Nancy Hefner Hawks

Norma Garcia, seated at left, tutors first-through-third-graders with their alphabet. Students taking part are Teresa Haro, at chalkboard; and from top to bottom, Omar Cepeda, James Valencia and Laura Gonzalez during the private tutoring lessons held from 6 to 7 p.m. Mondays at Carver Elementary School.

Emma Ramos, standing, works over lesson plans with students from left, Rebecca Valencia and Dora Martinez. Seated with Mrs. Valencia is her daughter, Joanna. After a long day, these students are still willing to come out during the evening to obtain additional knowledge, even if they have to bring their small children along with them.

Norma Gonzalez, private tutor, at left, with the aid of Robert E. Lee High School sophomore Blake Perez, helps students Ruel Martinez and Edward Valencia, from left, with their memorizing techniques as they play a card game as part of their lesson for the week.

# Never too late for 'Families Reading Together'

By Nancy Hefner Hawks
of The Baytown Sun

To be able to celebrate the absolute joy of simple reading has long been a top priority for both the Baytown school district and Sterling Municipal Library. There is one drawback, however. One out of every five American adults lacks the basic elementary skills which are needed to share in this joy.

In a study conducted by the US Department of Education it was discovered that children whose parents read to them before they begin public school tend to perform better once enrolled in school.

Unfortunately, millions of parents still lack the basic skills necessary to help their children in this very elementary method. Between one-fifth and one-third of all parents in this country cannot read a bedtime story to their own children.

In addition, these children who grow up in homes without books and printed materials cannot develop a love for the printed word. Research indicates that while illiteracy and poor reading skills are not hereditary, they can be generational since poor reading habits are passed from parent to child.

"Further studies into illiteracy predict that unless drastic changes are made in the next 10 years, these growing children will enter the work force ill-equipped to meet the changing technological demands taking place even today," says Denise Fischer, assistant city librarian/public services at Sterling Municipal Library and literacy project coordinator.

In order to try and alleviate the problem of illiteracy in the entire family, Sterling Municipal Library's Literacy Volunteers (LVA) project has initiated an intergenerational model that partners the library and the Baytown school district, as well as a community group sponsored by Lee College known as the Hispanic Educational Access Committee (HEAC), as well as Hispanic-owned businesses.

This model, which was totally developed by Mrs. Fischer and Kathy Barnett, an LVA volunteer since 1986 and an assistant principal within the school district, calls itself "Families Reading Together."

"This project utilizes specific instructional units which take four weeks to complete. In addition, the model establishes four distinct 'tracks,' one for adults, one for school-aged children, one for pre-schoolers and one for infants. These tracks function independently as well as in tandem with each other."

In addition, the program provides enrichment activities for all age groups. In this way, participants do not have to worry about child care while they are in the program.

"Entering into a partnership with the school district was welcomed eagerly by all parties involved," says Mrs. Fischer.

The HEAC includes citizens who have set as a priority the educational enrichment of Hispanic citizens. Numerous members are both Friends of the Library and school district employees as well.

Each group has assumed the responsibility for a specific set of tasks within the model.

The school district has provided the program with the Carver Elementary School campus. On site participants in charge are Jay Stailey, new principal at the school; Josie Orosco, a counselor with the school district; Mrs. Fischer and Lupe Alfaro, site coordinator, who, in addition she also serves as the bilingual coordinator.

"The program got started in January of this year," says Mrs. Alfaro. "Our main resource is the library, but in addition we have numerous volunteers from the Hispanic Access Committee. Hispanic-owned businesses have contributed funds to hire a security guard for the evenings we meet."

Only parents of Carver students were chosen for this project. This was to further the goal of fostering a stronger feeling of loyalty to the school. Only those parents who were orally bilingual were targeted for the program.

"Each of these parents realized that they were making a weekly commitment for themselves, as well as their children," says Mrs. Alfaro. "Only seven families were chosen for the pilot program, but this small number of families has yielded what is now totalling 37, with the aid of 18 tutors," she adds.

"During each two-hour session, parents spend the first hour learning to read materials of interest to themselves. The second hour is equally divided between learning to read a targeted children's book and group parenting skills," explains Mrs. Alfaro.

Mrs. Fischer adds that "the school-aged children divide their first hour between using the school's computer and working with a tutor in a small group setting concentrating on vocabularies and English oral proficiency. During the second hour the children learn vocabulary and thematic content, corresponding to information they would need to appreciate the targeted book their parents are mastering."

"When all of our participants come together for the second hour, we meet very informally. Parents and children sit among themselves on the floor or wherever they wish in order to feel comfortable with their children. Skills are taught using discussion and crafts. The parents read the assigned book to their children and what follows is amazing," says Mrs. Fischer.

Upon completion of having the book read to them, the students quickly gather before Mrs. Alfaro and eagerly await what questions she will ask of them. As each question is asked of them, the students quickly raise their hands to show their parents and tutors alike, what they have learned.

This process not only works with oral language skills, but also with improved self-esteem and a new confidence.

Following this part of the session, free books are awarded to those parents who earned them during the month by reading at least four books to their children. This guarantees that literature will find its way into the family's personal library. In addition, it also illustrates the power and influence of reading because, the more books read, the more books earned.

By the end of the piloted six months, significant increases were noted in self-esteem and self-confidence by both parents and children.

This past September, the "Families Reading Together" project was expanded to 20 families.

Mrs. Fischer adds, "'Families Reading Together' has been labeled a success. In addition, we feel that support for this project has brought segments of the community together in a very positive way. Our experience indicates that community partners and intergenerational concepts can instill a love for reading and learning into the children of work force 2000 workpool and, hopefully, bring an end to the cycle of illiteracy."

As described to Mrs. Fischer by one grateful father, ""I have lived in Baytown for many years. In all those years, I have never really thought that knowing English was that important to me. Now that I know English, it helps me a lot. I am trying hard to learn. I still think it is not too late to learn."

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# Library, district in project on reading

For one group of families whose children attend Carver Elementary School, Monday night has become very special. That is when they attend school together as a family for Families Reading Together.

This joint program of Sterling Municipal Library and the Baytown school district with the Hispanic Educational Access Committee acting as a catalyst targets the families of bilingual students who have been identified as at risk of school failure and needing additional support because their parents do not read english.

Joy Wristers, principal at Carver and enthusiastic supporter of Families Reading Together, expressed her approval of the project. "If we are to truly break the cycle of illiteracy, we much teach the family unit the fundamentals of reading as well as the relationship between learning in the home and that at school," she said.

The Monday night sessions have as a goal the increased literacy of everyone in the family. For many of these Hispanic families, reading fluently in English is a skill never acquired; therefore, there is little exposure to reading at home for their children. The relationship between non-reading families and the "at risk" identification has been shown by studies which demonstrate that reading to children at an early age is the single most important activity to insure a child's educational success. If children read or are read to for 15 minutes each and every day, their school success rises and reading becomes a lifelong habit.

Families Reading Together incorporates the many skills necessary for reading mastery. While parents in the group prepare a story to read to their children, the school children have reading enrichment activities including vocabulary building. They also receive tutoring on their school work and have additional time in the Carver WICAT lab. Preschool children listen to stories and have prereading activities. it's not all hard work; they enjoy crafts and group activities related to the story they will hear their parents read later in the evening.

The classes for both parent and children are conducted in English, another skill these families are working on mastering. As the parents strengthen their personal literacy in English, the whole family's literacy should increase. Parents will have additional opportunities for help through parenting skills activities primarily to reinforce their children's school work.

After their separate work periods, the parents and children come together for a family reading experience involving the entire family. After reading in individual family groups, the entire group discusses the books read or shares in activities related to the evening's story. The evening ends with a snack and a reminder to read. The desired result is that both parents and children will experience success in daily activities and in English.



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This project began on January 8 at Carver Elementary School with Lupe Alfaro as the coordinator. Rufo Sanchez, president of the Hispanic Educational; Access Committee, worked to bring about the partnership between the Literacy Volunteers of America at Sterling Municipal Library and Baytown school district. Josie Orosco, a counselor with Baytown schools, targeted the volunteers. Sterling Municipal Library provides all supplies, materials and technical support for Families Reading Together and Hispanic businesses in the community have contributed funds to provide a security guard for each session. The entire project was conceived of and developed by denise Fischer, assistant director at the library and director of its Literacy Volunteers of America program, and Kathy Barnett, assistant principal at Stephen F. Austin Elementary School.

*"If we are to truly break the cycle of illiteracy, we much teach the family unit the fundamentals of reading as well as the relationship between learning in the home and that at school."*

Carver Principal Joy Wristers

CELIA MARTINEZ uses games as well as texts with Carver students to reenforce vocabularies needed for TEAMS testing.

LUPE ALFARO, on-site coordinator, leads parents and childr through a discussion of the targeted book.

MYRALDA CANTU tutors the pre-school children, stressing vocabulary development.

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# EDUCATION

## Families Reading Together: Sharing the Joy

*by Denise R. Fischer*

The joy of reading has long been a priority for both public libraries and schools in America. The tragedy, however, is that one out of every five American adults lacks the basic skills needed to share in this joy. A study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education called *A Nation at Risk* found that children whose parents read to them before they start school tend to perform better in school.[1] However, millions of parents lack basic skills necessary to help their children in this rudimentary way. Between one-fifth and one-third of all parents cannot read a bedtime story to their children. In addition, children who grow up in homes devoid of books and print materials cannot develop a love for the printed word. Research indicates, then, that while illiteracy and poor reading skills are not hereditary, they can be generational since poor reading habits are passed from parent to child.

Further studies into illiteracy predict that unless drastic changes are made in the next 10 years, these growing children will enter the workforce ill equipped to meet changing technological demands. According the the Hudson institute's report *Workforce 2000*, these trends, when coupled with the predicted smaller growth in the labor force, project that by the year 2000 employers will experience serious skill shortages not experienced since World War II.[2]

Comparing the results of these two studies as well as others leads one to propose that approaching illiteracy "holistically" is a solution to breaking the cycle. Intergenerational literacy programs can provide this holistic approach since the literacy of the entire family unit is remediated. To that end, Sterling Municipal Library's Literacy Volunteers (LVA) project initiated an intergenerational model that partners the library, the Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District, and a community group sponsored by Lee College, the Hispanic Educational Access Committee (HEAC), as well as Hispanic owned businesses.

*Celia Martinez engages the children in vocabulary activities.*

The model developed by Denise Fischer and Kathy Barnett calls itself "Families Reading Together." Its roots are found in Boston University's "Collaborations for Literacy" pioneered by Ruth Nickse. Yet, it takes the "Collaborations" model to the next generation by employing specific educational objectives for each level of participant. The "Families Reading Together" model utilizes specific instructional units which take four weeks to complete. In addition, the model establishes four distinct "tracks," one for adults, one for school aged children, one for preschoolers, and one for infants. The tracks function independently as well as in tandem with each other. By providing enrichment activities for all age groups, families do not have to worry about child care to participate in the program. The Great Plains National Instructional Television Library (GPN) produces program notes for the *Reading Rainbow* titles which also provide ideas for these activities.[3]

Entering into a partnership with the school district was welcomed by both sides. In fact, public library/school district sponsorships have a long history in our community. Moreover, Kathy Barnett, while volunteering since 1986 in the LVA project, is also an assistant principal within the district. The HEAC includes citizens who have set as a priority the educational enrichment of Hispanic citizens. Many are both Friends of the Library and school district employees. Each partner

*Baudelio Valencia shares a book with daughter Jannette while tutor Emma Ramos looks on.*

---

*Denise Fischer is Assistant City Librarian-Public Services/Literacy Project Coordinator, Sterling Municipal Library, Baytown.*



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assumed responsibility for a specific set of tasks in the model. The district agreed to provide an elementary school campus as the site for the project as well as the efforts of Josie Orosco, a Chapter I counselor. The HEAC adopted the task of recruiting the volunteers who would serve as tutors. The library provided the financial support in the form of materials, training, and a bilingual site coordinator, Lupe Alfaro. Hispanic owned businesses contributed funds to hire a security guard for the evenings the group met.

The campus chosen for the project had been designated by the federally funded Chapter I program as an economically and culturally disadvantaged campus. It was also located in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood. The scores achieved by students in the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) proved to be one of the lowest in the district, and parental involvement in school functions was often lagging. Using this campus would provide us with the opportunity to create a unique extracurricular activity.

Only parents of campus children were chosen for the project. This was to further our goal of fostering a stronger feeling of loyalty to the school. We targeted only those parents who were orally bilingual, but whose low literacy levels could not provide the nurturing, educational environment in the home. All parents realized that they were making a weekly commitment for themselves and their children, a commitment that would last from January through May. Only seven families were chosen for the pilot, but this small number of families yielded twenty participants. All parents were pretested using the LVA READ test and were given vision screens.

During each two-hour session, parents spent one hour learning to read materials of interest to themselves using the traditional LVA methodology. Most of these studies revolved around job-related or life skills. The field tested LVA series *Read on! II* was used as a basic skills text. The second hour was equally divided between learning to read a targeted children's book and group parenting skills. The model used the "Reading Rainbow" children's books and TV series as materials. Parenting skills often focused on materials sent home by school counselors or materials that are directly related to parental involvement in the child's educational progress. Additional samples of quality children's reading materials were also made available for parents to borrow.

School-aged children divided their first hour between using the campus' World Institute of Computer Aided Teaching (WICAT) computerized reading laboratory and working with a tutor in a small group setting on TEAMS vocabularies and English oral proficiency. The second hour found the children learning vocabulary and thematic content that, unbeknownst to them, corresponded to information they would need to appreciate the targeted book their parents were mastering. These skills were taught using discussion and craft activities. We learned very early in the project that vocabularies taken for granted in homes more culturally and literarily exposed were absent here. Discussions involving simple contrasts between "Back East" and "Out West" found that even terms like "skyscraper" could not be pictorially envisioned by students in the fourth grade.

Preschool children, who were mostly monolingual Spanish speakers, were placed in small group tutoring and taught English vocabularies and prereading skills. They, too, participated in thematically based craft activities as well as spent time using the WICAT computer's preschool modules.

The fourth session in the unit brought parents and children together in their family units to share the learned book. Because of the prereading activities, both parents and children could share the impact of the book as well as the nurturing experience of sharing literature. Once complete, all parents and all children joined together to discuss the book. Literal comprehension and sequencing was explored with the children, while higher levels of comprehension (inferential, comparative, evaluative) were explored with the adults.

Children were next asked to present and explain their crafts to the group. This not only worked with oral language skills, but improved self-esteem and confidence. Free children's books were then awarded to those parents who earned them during the month by reading at least four books to their children. This guaranteed that literature would find its way into the family's personal library. It also illustrated the power and influence of reading; because, the more you read, the more free books you earned.

During the piloted six months, the project explored topics that related to stereotypes and preconceived ideas that often originate due to a lack of experience or knowledge, handicaps, the senses (we taught the children to recite Jack and Jill in sign language), caring for pets, life on a farm, and community service personnel.

Significant increases in self-esteem and self-confidence have been demonstrated by both parents and children. One father's hand physically quivered as he read to his child for the first time; subsequent readings have not only produced a sense of calm, but also a brilliant smile in the process. One mother is now looking ahead at the possibility that her dream of becoming a cosmetologist might become the reality that she thought would never be possible.

One child had become quite distressed about the scores she received in phonics prior to coming to the project. She even felt that she was not bright enough to improve. Because of the extra practice she received, her scores rose into the nineties and her self-esteem skyrocketed accordingly. Still another mother noted that her children now read to each other and wish her to read to them. As she wrote, "Now, we have the beautiful experience of learning together. I love this kind of program because it also helps me to have more positive communication with my children."

The participants in the project found an electricity in the air each night that molded a commitment to the program that surpassed their personal demands for the evening. One mother stated that her children wanted to come to class so badly that she used the event as a way to keep discipline at home. "If you're not good, you can't go to school that night!" And it worked! In fact,we had 100% attendance at all sessions save for a torrential thunderstorm that kept all driving to a minimum. We feel, however, that this father's written words best summarize the feelings of the adult participants: "I have lived in Baytown for many years and in all those years, I have never really thought that knowing English was that important to me. Now that I know that [a second language], it helps me a lot. I am trying hard to learn. I still think it is not too late to learn."

In September, the "Families Reading Together" project will be expanded to twenty families at one campus and a second campus will begin with five families. Since the project will run for a full school year, statistical methods for program evaluation will be used in addition to the behavioral changes. The children's TEAMS and academic scores will be compared with those from prior to entering the program. In addition, parents will be given the READ post-test and this will be compared to pretest scores.

Overall, "Families Reading Together" has been labelled a success. In addition, we feel that support for this project has brought segments of the community together in a positive way. Our experience indicates that community partners and intergenerational concepts can instill a love for reading and learning into the



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children of our "Workforce 2000" workpool and, hopefully, bring an end to the cycle of illiteracy. □

**Endnotes**

[1]National Commission on Excellence in Education. *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform.* Washington, D.C.: USGPO. 1983.

[2]Johnston, William B. and Arnold H. Packer. *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century.* Indianapolis: Hudson Institute, 1987.

[3]Turner, Constance A., ed. *Reading Rainbow: A Guide for Teachers.* Lincoln, NE: Great Plains National Instructional Television Library, 1986-.


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Teresa, second from left, and Jesus Haro share the joys of reading a story to daughter Teresa and nephew Filiberto. Tutor Ernestine Garcia, far left, looks on encouragingly.

# 'Families Reading Together' puts dent into problem of illiteracy

By DENISE R. FISCHER

A study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education called "A Nation at Risk" found that children whose parents read to them before they start school tend to perform better in school. However, between one-fifth to one-third of all parents lack the basic reading skills necessary to read a bedtime story to their children.

In addition, research indicates that while illiteracy and poor reading skills are not hereditary, they can be generational since poor reading habits are passed from parent to child.

Approaching illiteracy "holistically" is a solution to breaking the cycle. Intergenerational literacy programs can provide this holistic approach since the literacy of the entire family unit is remediated.

To that end and under the direction of librarian Denise Fischer and volunteer Kathy Barnett, the Sterling Municipal's Library Literacy Volunteers (LVA) project in Baytown, Texas, initiated an intergenerational model which calls itself "Families Reading Together." Its roots are found in Boston University's "Collaborations for Literacy" pioneered by Ruth Nickse.

The model establishes four distinct "tracks," one for adults, one for school-aged children, one for preschoolers, and one for infants. The tracks function independently as well as in tandem with each other. By providing enrichment activities for all age groups, families do not have to worry about child care to participate in the program.

The campus chosen for the project was in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood. The scores achieved by students in the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) proved to be one of the lowest, and parental involvement in school functions was often lagging. Seven families were chosen for the pilot which ran from this past January to May.

During each two-hour sessions, parents spent one hour learning to read materials of interest to themselves using the traditional LVA methodology. Most of these studies revolved around job related or life skills. The second hour was equally divided between learning to read a targeted children's book and parenting skills often focusing on materials sent home by school counselors or materials that are directly related to parental involvement in the child's educational progress.

School-aged children divided their first hour between using the campus' computerized reading laboratory and working with a tutor in a small group setting on TEAMS vocabularies and English oral proficiency. The second hour found the children learning vocabulary and thematic content that, unbeknownst to them, corresponded to information they would need to appreciate the targeted-book their parents were mastering. These skills were taught using discussion and craft activities. We learned very early in the project that vocabularies taken for granted in homes more culturally and literarily exposed were absent here.

Preschool children, who were mostly monolingual Spanish speakers, were placed in samll group tutoring and taught English vocabularies and prereading skills. They too participated in thematically based craft activities as well as spent time using the computer's preschool modules.

The fourth session in the unit brought parents and children together in their family units to share the learned book. Because of the prereading activities, both parents and children could share the impact of the book as well as the experience of sharing literature. Once complete all parents and all children joined together to discuss the book.

During the piloted six months the project explored topics that related to stereotypes and preconceived ideas that often originate due to a lack of experience or knowledge, handicaps, the senses, caring for pets, life on a farm, and community service personnel.

Significant increases in self-esteem and self-confidence have been demonstrated by both parents and children. One father's hand physically quivered as he read to his child for the first time. One mother is now looking ahead at the possibility that her dream of becoming a cosmetologist might become the reality she thought would never be possible.

One mother reported that her children now read to each other and wish her to read to them. As she wrote, "Now, we have the beautiful experience of learning together. I love this kind of program because it also helps me to have more positive communication with my children."

*Denise Fischer, Assistant City Librarian-Public Services Literacy Project Coordinator, Sterling Municipal Library, wrote the above article in the fall issue of the Texas Library Journal. It is reprinted with permission. The "Families Reading Together" project receives funding from the Diocesan Campaign for Human Development.*